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NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

JASPER RYAN'S COUNTERMOVE

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NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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Jasper Ryan's Countermove;

OR,

PATSY'S REMARKABLE COMPACT.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

TAKING A DESPERATE CHANCE.

Chick and Patsy, with Danny, the chauffeur, had just passed through one of the most thrilling and exciting experiences of their lives. They had been in what Patsy facetiously called an "automobile duel," and the surprising part of it was that they had come out of it with their lives.*

They had captured Jasper Ryan, for whom Patsy, under the name of Alan Gwynn, was acting as chauffeur; they had nearly wrecked two automobiles, and Chick incidentally had received a bullet in his left shoulder from one of Ryan's pistols. Fortunately it was not a serious wound, although he realized that he would have to lay by for repairs for a few weeks.

They had taken their prisoner, whom Patsy had knocked on the head with one of his own pistols, to the residence of Richard Baxter, in Eighty-third Street, near the Drive, where Nick Carter and Conroy Conner, of the secret service, were awaiting news of them, Mrs. Baxter being Conner's sister. Danny had been sent on to the garage with the detective's automobile, which needed some repairs after the collision.

*See No. 578 of the NICK CARTER WEEKLY.

Ryan had been knocked senseless by the blow that Patsy dealt him, and had been bundled inside the body of the big Packard—a limousine—and Patsy had directed Danny to tie him securely with one of the tug-ropes.

But the time had been short, and Patsy had been unable to give the prisoner his personal attention. Danny had reported, however, that the man was so knocked out that he didn't need tying, but that he had tied him up all the same, according to orders. Chick, being wounded, was unable to lend a hand. The time was midnight.

When the Packard drew up in front of Mrs. Baxter's home, Chick descended painfully, and, pausing for a moment, said to Patsy:

"I'll go inside and report, Patsy. You stay out here and guard the prisoner, will you?"

"Sure, Chick," was the quick reply. "You're as white as a sheet. Have them dress your wound for you before you try to come out again. I'll be all right."

And so Chick had gone inside the house with the good news he had to carry.

His wound was painful, and, going into the warm room as he did, made him faint for a moment.

Nick and Conner both at once gave their attention to his wound, and after that it required a little time before

his story could be told. The outline of it has just been given.

When Patsy found himself alone he got down from the machine, and, passing to the door of the limousine, opened it and peered inside.

Ryan, apparently still unconscious and wrapped in many coils of the tug-rope as Danny had adjusted it, was propped up in one corner of the interior, breathing heavily, and for a moment the young detective wondered if he ought not call a doctor.

He stood with his hand on the door, undecided, for the whole appearance of Ryan suggested that he was in bad straits. His breathing was unnatural, and altogether Patsy was impressed with the seriousness of the case.

"It wouldn't do for him to die out here in the machine, for want of care," he muttered. "I wish I had asked Chick to have a look at him before he went inside. I wonder now what I ought to do."

He remained for another full minute peering into the gloom of the car, and then he called out:

"Ryan! I say, Ryan!"

There was no reply, no indication that the man was conscious at all.

"Maybe you'll like your own name better," muttered Patsy; and then he called again:

"Studley! Mr. Studley!"

No response.

"Faith, I must have soaked him for fair," grumbled the young detective. "Well, he had just shot Chick, and why shouldn't I? All the same, I hope I haven't killed him. By the way he breathes there is sure something the matter. I'll feel of him, and shake him a bit, and see if I can rouse him."

He stepped inside the limousine, and, leaning forward, touched Ryan on the cheek.

"Ryan!" he said again. "Wake up, can't you?"

To Patsy's horror, instead of waking up, Ryan suddenly ceased to breathe.

"That's funny," said Patsy. "I wonder if he has fainted, or is he dead?"

He waited for a moment, wondering what he would do, and then it occurred to him to listen for the beating of the man's heart.

"If he's dead," was his thought, "there is no use in going after a doctor and giving myself away; but if he has only fainted—anyhow, I'll call some one out of the house. But first I'll just see if his heart is beating."

Suiting the action to the word he put one knee on the cushion and then bent forward until he could press one ear over the region of the heart; and then——

Then Ryan's arms encircled him. Ryan's left hand seized him by the throat. Ryan's right fist dealt him a terrific blow behind the ear, and Patsy sank down, limp and senseless, on the floor of the car. Patsy had not noticed that Ryan's arms were free from the coils of the rope. It was too dark inside the car to see plainly anyhow.

For a moment after he struck Patsy down, Ryan remained perfectly still; it was plain that he had exhausted nearly all the strength he had in that short and entirely one-sided struggle, for Patsy had been taken at such complete disadvantage that he could do nothing to defend himself, even if he had had the time.

But it was only for a moment that Ryan remained still; only long enough to get his breath. Then he rose to his feet laboriously, clinging to the sides of the car as he did so; and the coils of rope in which Danny had wound him fell harmlessly to the floor.

Ryan, still clinging to the sides of the car, managed to pass himself through the still open door, and, although he swayed and nearly fell when his feet were on the pavement, he did manage to turn and close the door after him.

Then, hanging on as if for dear life, as one clings to things aboard a plunging ship, he moved forward toward the front seat.

The engine was still running noiselessly; it had not occurred to Patsy to stop it, and the Packard is one of the most silent cars in the world.

Twice Ryan attempted to climb up under the steering-wheel before he succeeded in accomplishing it; but at last he got there somehow—and a moment later the big Packard moved silently forward, gaining speed as it went; and it turned southward into Riverside Drive, and, as far as that vicinity of Eighty-third Street was concerned, disappeared.

The swift motion through the night air had the effect of wine upon the reviving energies of Jasper Ryan, and he drove the machine swiftly to Seventy-second Street, where he turned the corner and stopped.

This time, when he sprang from the car, he did not sway or stagger, although he was still very weak.

Patsy was beginning to stir a little when Ryan got in beside him, but he was still far from conscious; and Ryan produced a small vial from which he took two pellets, and these he forced into Patsy's mouth; and he remained there, holding Patsy's head until he knew that the morphin had dissolved and had therefore taken effect.

"A quarter of a grain will be rather a strong dose for you, Patsy," he murmured, "but we will have to risk it this time."

He swallowed exactly eight of the pellets himself, however, and with the murmured remark:

"That which makes you sleep soundly, my lad, wakes me up. And now, Mr. Nicholas Carter, up there in Eighty-third Street, I think that, notwithstanding your valiant efforts, Mr. Jasper Ryan will continue his journey."

He resumed his place under the wheel and started the

machine again, making as rapid time as the ordinance permitted, but taking care not to exceed it, until he turned into Central Park West.

As he was passing the Hotel Majestic, he noticed another Packard limousine car standing unattended at the curb. It was a car of exactly the same type as the one he was driving, and instantly it occurred to Ryan how to make a really brilliant move.

He drew up behind the other machine and got down.

Then he looked carefully around him, to discover, as he hoped would be the case, that no one was near enough to observe his movements; and he moved quickly, but silently.

He opened the tool-box of his own machine and secured a pair of pliers, and then he deftly removed the three license numbers from the rear of his own car. He had noticed that the other Packard also carried three numbers.

Again taking stock of his surroundings, he glided forward, and with deft and rapidly moving hands and fingers he presently succeeded in removing the numbers from the other car and replacing them with those he had carried.

After that it was the work of a couple of moments only to adjust the stolen numbers to what he was pleased now to call his own car; and then he returned to the driver's seat and started on again.

"There," he mused, "it may be a week before that change is discovered, and it may be found out some time during the coming day; but I think I have stolen a march on them, all the same. In the morning the police will send out warning to arrest any Packard car bearing those numbers, but they won't think of looking for them in the city of New York.

"When they do find them, it will take a little time to change their order to the numbers I have just borrowed; and by that time I will have made another change, and perhaps still another. It will save the bother and expense of purchasing licenses in the States I pass through.

"True, ultimately they will trail me by the numbers, but that will take a long time. It will be much too slow for Nick Carter; and, anyhow, I will have disposed of this car before that. Heavens, how my head aches. It's a wonder that young devil didn't crack my skull."

He drove on in silence for a time after that, but presently began to murmur to himself again:

"I'll take the very same route I had determined upon before this happened," he mused, "for the good and sufficient reason that the police will suppose I would change it;" and so he presently crossed the Harlem River into Westchester County, driving on grimly through the night, intent only upon escaping from his pursuers, and ultimately reaching the goal he had originally selected.

At that place a fortune was awaiting him—a fortune that he had stolen; a fortune in cash, and one that would suffice for his needs for the remainder of his life, he thought.

He had his plans thoroughly matured; he knew every move he wished to make, and he was a cool, uncompromising, relentless man, who stopped at nothing to gain his ends.

Jasper Ryan was free again; and not only that, he carried with him as a prisoner one of Nick Carter's assistants.

For once in his career Patsy was up against it rather hard, as he was soon to discover.

CHAPTER II.

PATSY HAS A HEADACHE.

When Patsy opened his eyes to consciousness after the morphin sleep that Ryan had compelled him to take, his head ached as if it would split, and he was about as miserable as a man can be, and keep alive.

For a moment he thought he was alone, and he groaned aloud, while at the same time he wondered where he was.

He saw the surroundings of a comfortable room, meanly but adequately furnished, with a low ceiling and sloping roof on either side, in which were dormer-windows.

Presently, when his eyes became accustomed to the light and he had emitted a second groan, he discovered a man seated in an armchair over by one of the windows, and the sight of him instantly recalled to the young detective all that had occurred.

"Ryan!" he exclaimed involuntarily.

"A good guess, Patsy," was the instant reply. "How are you feeling, my lad?"

"Ugh! Like—like anything except myself."

"I think I got even with you that time, didn't I, Patsy?"

"What do you mean—got even with me?"

"Well, you gave me a headache with a blow on the top of my cranium. I gave you a headache with a dose of morphin, and I'll bet a fiver that yours is worse than mine was."

"It couldn't be any worse and me stay alive, I'll tell you that. Have they got a hydrant around here anywhere? Because if they have I wish you'd turn the full force of it down my throat. It's literally on fire."

Ryan, with a low laugh, left his seat and carried a pitcher of water across the room to the bed where Patsy was lying, and he stood smilingly by while Patsy drained it to the last drop.

It revived him somewhat, and relieved the ache of his head a little; and after a moment he demanded:

"Look here, Ryan, what does all this mean? Did you carry me off—eh?"

"I certainly did."

"How did you do it?"

"Don't you remember?"

"I remember stooping over you to listen if your heart was beating, and your hugging me all of a sudden; and then I think you swiped me one on the jugular, or behind the ear, and——"

"Quite right, Patsy."

"Well, what after that?"

"After that, just as you were returning to consciousness, I administered a small dose of morphin; quite a large one for you, it was, and you went off to sleep; sleep from which you have only just awakened. Then I brought you here."

"Where are we?"

"It isn't definitely necessary that you should know, is it?"

"I'd like to know, if it is all the same to you."

"Well, I will satisfy your curiosity to this extent: We are in Dutchess County."

"Dutchess County. Then you got clean away, didn't you?"

"I certainly did."

"You're a corker, Ryan. I admire your nerve if I don't like your principles."

"Thank you."

"What did you bring me here for? Why didn't you dump me out on the sidewalk and leave me there?"

"There are two questions almost in one, Patsy. To the first I will reply that I haven't yet quite determined. To the second, that I considered it safer to do as I did."

"Humph! What time of day is it, anyhow?"

"It is about two in the afternoon."

"Of the next day?"

"Yes, although that is rather a Hibernianism, isn't it?"

"Maybe so. Where are my clothes? I'd like to get up."

"You shall have them in due time. You are much too 'heady' to get up just yet. Try it, if you wish. You couldn't stand on your feet."

He did try it, and he found that Ryan was correct.

"Gee!" he exclaimed, as he fell back upon the bed again. "Isn't there any antidote for that poison you gave me?"

"You're taking it now."

"Am I? Where is it? How am I getting it?"

"In your lungs. Air is about the only real antidote. A little exercise, later, will do no harm; and then a ride in the open air when the dew begins to fall;" and Ryan chuckled audibly.

"Say, Ryan, did you bring me here in the Packard?"

"I did; and I have washed away that 'Hindu scar' you had on your face, too. Really, I have taken excellent care of you."*

"Confound the scar—and you, too, for that matter! What's the game? What do you want with me?"

"I just now informed you that I had not determined that point yet."

"Well, when you do, I'd be obliged to you if you'd let me know."

"Don't you think I owe you something for that crack on the skull you gave me?"

"Oh, you've paid that back, all right. I'll give you a receipt in full. The next time you want to drug me with morphin, do it with the butt of a pistol, will you?"

Ryan laughed outright.

"Patsy, does your head feel clear enough to permit you to make a bargain with me?" he asked.

"I'm not at all sure about that, Ryan. I'll hear the bargain first, and then answer you."

Ryan chuckled again.

"I don't think I will go into it for a while yet," he said. "There is ample time. It doesn't get dark till about six at this time of the year. That will give you four hours in which to pull yourself together. You observe, Patsy, that for the present I am caring for my complexion."

"Eh—what?"

"The sun might injure it, so I travel only by night."

"Oh! I catch on."

"It's healthier, don't you think so?"

"For you—yes; but I have seen coppers who could read numbers on the tail end of automobiles, even after dark."

"They may read mine and welcome."

"Do you mean that you have changed the numbers on the Packard?"

"I have changed them twice since we left the city of New York."

"Twice? I don't understand."

"It is very simple. I merely watch for an opportunity—for some other machine standing unattended, that bears three license numbers. Then I trade mine for theirs—see?"

"Well! I hadn't thought of that. What a mix-up there will be in numbers before you are through with your travels, if you keep that sort of thing up. But I can see how it throws the whole bunch off the track, all right."

"The joke of it is that the first car I traded numbers with happened to be a Packard of the same model as ours. I fancy they will have a nice time explaining when they are held up, don't you think so?"

"Yes; it is a rotten joke, though, to play on an unsuspecting party."

"I grant you that; but necessity knows no law, you

*A disguise that Patsy had worn. See No. 578.

know. Now, Patsy, do you think if I left you for half an hour you could sleep?"

"Sleep!" exclaimed the young detective, with supreme disgust. "If you leave me now, I'll get up and chase you."

"You can't. I've got your clothes."

"Aren't they in the room?"

"No."

"Where are they, then?"

"I'll tell you that when I think it is time for you to rise."

"Confound you!"

"You see, Patsy, I didn't know just what you would say or do when you woke up, and I figured that I could make better terms with you if I had your duds. 'A man is not a man at all without his clothes on.'"

"So you swiped mine?"

"Exactly."

"You seem to think of everything, Ryan."

"I have to, now. I am outside the law. But I'm just as good a fellow at heart as I ever was."

"Humph!"

"Patsy?"

"Well?"

"How's your head?"

"It's better."

"Can you indulge in a serious talk with me? Do you feel like it?"

"I guess so."

"I want you to tell me about Lydia."*

"Oh!"

"You haven't forgotten the letter I wrote to you, have you?"

"No."

"I meant every word I said in that letter, Patsy."

"I gave you credit for that much."

"Of course, last night, since you had taken up the game against me, if you had been the only obstacle between me and liberty, I would have shot you without a second thought. But under no other circumstances would I raise a hand against you. It was Petrosini who told me about what you did. But he couldn't tell me much. I want you to tell it all to me; will you?"

"I don't know. There isn't much to tell, Ryan."

"Oh, yes, there is. There is much that I wish to hear."

"Well, you know I was on your trail that night. It was rather a blind trail, too."

"Yes."

"I found a ticket-agent on an elevated-station who had seen you on the opposite platform, and later I found the conductor with whom you had ridden up-town. You know who that was."

"Yes. Boston Wheeler. But that part of it doesn't interest me."

"He took me to the house where you and Lydia had been living. The front door was ajar——"

"I closed it when I left the house. I remember that distinctly."

"Wheeler pretended to be very much surprised, and that was the first hunch I got that he wasn't playing on the level. He rather overdid it."

"Go on, please."

"I followed him into the house, and we hurried upstairs to the front room. We found her there, Ryan."

"She was still alive, Patsy?"

"Yes; just alive and that was all. The room looked as if a tornado had struck it. The bed was torn to pieces, too, although Lydia was fully dressed. I carried her to the bed, and did all I could for her. That's all."

CHAPTER III.

A REMARKABLE COMPACT.

"Tell me what she said, Patsy—if she said anything."

"She called for you two or three times. She thought that I was you, returned to her."

"Thank Heaven for that."

"Eh—what?"

"I mean that I am thankful that in her last moments she believed I was with her."

"Oh. I understand."

"What more, Patsy?"

"She said something about knowing that it wasn't true; she said something about loving you, and she whispered your name at the very last. That's all, I guess, Ryan. It was a heartrending scene, and one that I don't want to experience again. But she convinced me that you were not guilty of that crime."

He stopped, for Ryan was leaning forward with his head on his hands, as still as though carved in stone. And Patsy respected the man's suffering and remained silent.

Presently Ryan spoke again.

"There is something I wish to say to you, Patsy," he said.

"Say it, then, Ryan, whatever it is."

"I know your horror of me so far as Lydia is concerned, but I would like to explain a little of it to you."

"Why?"

"Not as extenuating my own misdeeds, but to assure you that I was always good to her, and that——"

"Look here, Ryan, the least said about that, the better. You were a married man, with a wife somewhere in New Hampshire, and you deceived that poor girl. It is true that you went to the altar with her. It is true that you

*See No. 577 of the NICK CARTER WEEKLY. Also, 578.

were her husband, even though she was not your wife, and I suppose it is equally true that if you had had your way she would never have known the difference."

"It *is* true."

"But all the same, Ryan, those things will come out, and it is always the woman who suffers. There aren't words in the language to express my contempt for a man who would do such a thing as you did, no matter what his fancied excuse may be. I'll say one thing for you, though: I believe she died without doubting you."

"Thank you, Patsy. That's what I wanted to hear—what I longed to hear you say."

"You're welcome, if it does you any good. I suppose if Lydia were here and knew the truth she would forgive you."

"And so would you, if you knew the truth."

"Eh? The truth of what?"

"Patsy, let me tell you something, and, although it comes from a man who is now a criminal, it is the real thing. There are passages in the life of every man which the world knows nothing of; there are crosses borne by your every-day acquaintances which you little suspect; there are men on the right of you, on the left of you, before you, and behind you, who need but the weight of a breath of air to make them good, bad, or indifferent. Lydia came into my life at a time when I was desperate because of my domestic affairs. Her influence saved the lives of four people I had determined to kill, and saved me from suicide. Shall you say that she had no mission?"

"No; those things are beyond me, Ryan."

"In return I sought diligently to make her happy. I spent almost all my evenings with her—and then Boston Wheeler, who had loved her before I met her, somehow searched out my real identity. He discovered that I was Billy Studley, in New York society, and I knew that the day would come when he would tell her.

"Patsy, there was only one way to keep from her the truth, and that was to take her far from New York—and that I had not the means to do. True, I received a very large salary, but the moment I should leave New York that salary would cease."

"So you robbed the trust company."

"And so I robbed the trust company. When I left the house that night—the night that Lydia was killed—I expected to send for her within a month anyway, and sooner, if possible. She had full instructions how to act. We would have gone to Argentina, and for the rest of our lives——"

"Stop right there, Ryan. For the rest of your life you would have been haunted by the fear that Lydia would discover that you were a thief. I know it hurts to be called a thief, but you are one, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"You would only have been changing ghosts, that's all. Before, you dreaded lest she discovered you to be a bigamist; later, you would have dreaded lest she discover you to be a thief. Tell me this: Of the two, which would you now prefer she should have known?"

"The first, Patsy, the first, because she would know that that crime was committed for love of her."

"Well, Ryan, don't forget that *she knows both, now.*"

"I had not thought of that," said Ryan in a harsh whisper. "I had not thought of that;" and for a quarter of an hour he sat staring straight ahead of him with unwinking eyes, seeing nothing.

At the end of that time he rose abruptly and left the room, nor did Patsy see him again for another hour.

But the young detective improved the time, first, by searching vainly for his clothing, and then in thinking deeply upon the circumstance in which he was placed.

He wondered if he could not somehow turn it to account; he wondered if it were not possible to prevail upon Ryan to give up the stolen money.

He had discovered during the interview that Ryan had a heart that could be touched, if one knew how to reach it, and Patsy wondered if he could not somehow reach it in a way that would be lasting and telling.

"I wonder how? I wonder how?" he kept saying to himself; and he was still thinking it when Ryan returned.

Every evidence of his interview with Patsy had disappeared, and, outwardly at least, he was the same careless daredevil. Ryan, as ever, as well prepared for a kettle-drum reception on Fifth Avenue as for a night at a gaming-table; as ready for a fight as for a joke; fearless, insolent, gifted, fascinating in his own strange way; a man who had within him the possibilities of greatness or littleness; who might have become anything that he sought diligently.

"I have been for a walk," he said lightly, as he entered the room. "I suppose you would like to have your clothing now, wouldn't you?"

"I should, if it's all the same to you."

"Well, that brings us, Patsy, to the proposition I had to make to you."

"Yes?"

"I have been thinking it over since I went out."

"Well?"

"You are dreadfully direct, Patsy."

"I suppose so. It's a way I have."

"You realize, don't you, Patsy, that you are my captive?"

"Well, if you put it that way, I suppose it's true. But if you'll step outside and bring me my clothes, and give me a fair show, we will have a try to see who is master."

Ryan laughed outright.

"Patsy, you are inimitable!" he exclaimed. "Could you handle Nick Carter in a fight?"

"No. But I could keep him pretty busy for a few minutes, at that."

"Has Nick never told you of what I can do?"

"Yes. He says you are almost as strong as he is—and so forth—if that's what you mean."

"Well, then, what sort of a show would you stand against me in a scrap?"

"I'd at least have a show for my money."

"Well, I am going to give you a show now. I am going to make you a proposition."

"Say, I begin to think you're dreaming about that proposition. That's about the steenth time you've coughed that up. Why don't you get it out?"

"I'll bring in your clothing and give it to you; you shall be as free as air and water within five minutes on condition that you will give me your parole for a week."

"My parole for a week? What in the world do you mean by that?"

"I want you to travel with me and keep me company for a week."

"What's that? Say that again."

"I want you to travel with me and keep me company for a week."

"I think, Mr. Jasper Ryan, that I will have to ask you kindly to elucidate. Have you gone plumb daffy, or have you been taking some of that poison you gave me? Are you bughouse, or only slightly woozy?"

"I am neither one thing nor the other. I am genuinely in earnest. I mean what I say. I want to make terms with you by which you will consent to keep me company for a week."

"Go on. I'm listening."

"If you will go with me, I promise not to put a restraining finger upon you in any way; I agree to trust you utterly, on condition that you will give me your word that you will do nothing to betray me to my enemies. That's broad enough, isn't it?"

"I suppose so."

"Of course, that means that you are not to write or telegraph or telephone or do anything which could possibly put Nick Carter or the police on my track, or lead them to suspect where you are."

"Well?"

"If you should agree, we may travel together, one week or two weeks or three weeks—as long a time as you elect to remain with me."

"But where does the advantage come in, so far as I am concerned?"

"I should say that you obtain two advantages, Patsy."

"What are they?"

"One is, you keep track of me all that time, and the other is, you are sure that you are each day getting nearer to that cash I took from the trust company."

"Well, there is something in that."

"Certainly there is."

"Will you tell me just why you want me to go with you?"

"For company. On my word, not a thing else."

"You don't expect me to fight for you, if the cops of some city try to take you in?"

"No. You are to be a neutral as long as you are with me."

"It strikes me as rather a queer proposition, and there is something rather taking about it, too."

"To be sure there is."

"Look here, Ryan, I'll take you up on one condition."

"What is that?"

"That you will let me write a letter to Nick to relieve his anxiety about me."

"I'll agree to that with two conditions tacked onto it."

"What are they?"

"That you permit me to read the letter you write, and that you let me send it to Boston to be mailed from there."

"Done."

CHAPTER IV.

A LETTER TO NICK CARTER.

Experts in criminology will agree with me that this was certainly an original situation in which Patsy found himself.

He had agreed to become the consort of a fugitive from justice, for a week or more, to remain utterly neutral during the time they were together, and to pose as the friend of this man for whom the police of the whole country were seeking.

But in making the decision as suddenly as he did, Patsy recalled the meditations he had been indulging in while he was left alone in the room after his talk with Ryan about Lydia.

He had wondered vaguely then if there was not some way in which he could keep with, or at least near to, Ryan; for, of course, the whole game, so far as Patsy was concerned, was the recovery of the fortune in cash that Ryan had stolen.

He could not disguise from himself how elated he would be if he could, at the end of the contemplated trip, return to Nick Carter and say:

"Here is the stolen cash. I succeeded in recovering it."

He wondered again, during the time that Ryan was absent to get his clothes, if ultimately he could not succeed in inducing Ryan to give up the cash without a struggle. Patsy knew now, since the talk about Lydia, that there was a soft spot in Ryan's heart; in fact, it was mostly a good heart; it was only surrounded by a hard shell that circumstances had calloused around it. Under the shell that heart was as soft and tender and well-meaning as a woman's.

Ryan returned with the clothing.

"Dress yourself, Patsy," he said. "There are paper

and envelopes, and pen and ink. When you are dressed, write the letter to Nick. When you are ready, rap three times on the floor. I will be in the room directly underneath this one."

And so Patsy, whose headache had by now almost gone, dressed himself quickly, after which he wrote:

"DEAR CHIEF: With the exception of the fact that I am now recovering from the effects of an overdose of morphin administered by Ryan, I am perfectly well, and also entirely safe, so don't give yourself a moment of uneasiness on my account. Just at this moment I have my own ideas about this case, and I am so intent upon carrying them out that I want you to give me a free hand for a time, and not expect me home till I get there. I want you to do another favor for me, too. I want you, if you will, to keep your hands off the Ryan case until I report again. I know what I am talking about. Leave Ryan to me, please—at least for the present. I cannot—in fact, I do not wish to say more here, but you can perhaps read between the lines. I only wish to assure you of this: that if you should pursue Ryan too hotly just now, and should succeed in getting close on his trail, you would handicap me out of the race, whereas I believe if left to myself I can win. Give my love to Chick. I hope he was not badly hurt. Remember me to Conner.

"Affectionately,

"PATSY."

When the letter was finished he rapped three times on the floor, and in a moment more Ryan appeared.

Without a word, Patsy turned the letter over to him to read, and watched his face narrowly while he was doing it.

As for Ryan, he smiled while he was reading, and he laughed aloud when he had finished the letter.

"For a masterpiece of literary creation, I call this a crackajack, Patsy," he said. "It is not at all what I expected you to write."

"No? Why not?"

"Well—I thought it would be different; that is all."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, Patsy, that you have succeeded in puzzling me. Do you suppose Nick will grant your request and keep his hands off for a while?"

"I think he will."

"Then I have that much to thank you for. I hardly think he will do it, however. He may suspect that I have forced you to write this letter."

"He will know better than that."

"How so?"

"He knows that you could not force me to write such a letter against my will."

"That's a good answer. Address your envelope now, and here is a stamp to put on it. I have already prepared my letter, in which yours is to be enclosed, to send to Boston. I will explain this much to you: I have a friend—a very dear friend—in the general post-office at Boston."

"I remember that in the letter you sent to me asking me to write to you, you told me to address you at the Boston post-office."*

"Exactly; and at the same time I wrote to my friend there and asked him to look out for any letter addressed to me, to take it and hold it until he heard from me. Now, I have written to him, thus—I will, of course, omit his name."

"Certainly."

"I have said: 'Since my last letter to you I have seen the young man to whom I referred in that document. He happens to be with me now, and he desires to have the enclosed letter forwarded to its address from the Boston office. Will you post it for me? I know you will. You shall hear from me again presently.

"'JASPER.'"

"That's all right, Ryan. I am satisfied with that."

"Then we will drop your letter into this larger envelope, thus. We seal it, thus. I place my hand over the name of my friend, but I show you that the envelope is addressed to the general post-office at Boston. Now, if you will put on your hat and come with me, we will put it in the care of Uncle Sam. The post-office is only three doors from here."

They descended the stairs together, traversed a short hallway, and came out upon a high, railed-in stoop, which fronted a large, framed building—and this one building contained the hotel, the general store, and the post-office of the little village where Ryan had stopped for the day.

They passed close to three men seated in chairs on the stoop—it could not be called a piazza or a veranda—on their way to the post-office, and Patsy thought they eyed him curiously.

After dropping the letter, as they issued from the post-office again, Ryan approached the men, and, taking some money from his pocket, he said to one of them:

"My friend seems to be all right, now. I think that, after all, I will not need your services. Here is fifteen dollars to divide between you for your trouble. Please give my regards to the doctor, and say to him that if I should need his services I will return."

The three men rose, grinned at Patsy, and with a word or two of thanks, took themselves off down the steep steps of the stoop, and thence along the roadway.

Burly fellows they were, too, and Patsy watched them curiously until they disappeared around a bend in the road; then he turned to Ryan, who was smiling at him.

"What was all that about?" he demanded.

"I thought that perhaps you'd catch on, Patsy," said Ryan, laughing silently.

"Well, I don't."

"Those three men are keepers from a private sanitarium a mile back in the country."

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*See No. 578 of the NICK CARTER WEEKLY.

"Oh!"

"I had made every arrangement, Patsy, to have them take charge of you for a time in case you saw fit to decline my proposition."

"The devil you had!"

"That is precisely what I did. You see, I couldn't hurt you; I wouldn't do that. I couldn't take you any farther with me against your will, and I couldn't afford to leave you here to put all the police of the country on my trail; now, could I?"

"I suppose not."

"So, while you were sleeping, I visited the doctor at that sanitarium. I happened to be acquainted with him, and to know that he wouldn't betray me. I could, in fact, hide at his place indefinitely if I cared to do so, but I'd rather be in prison."

"I don't doubt it."

"I told him, Patsy, that I had a young friend down here who had been taking morphin until it affected his mind so that he thought he was Patrick Garvan, an assistant to Nick Carter, and that unless I succeeded in convincing him that he was wrong, I would have to leave that young man in his charge indefinitely; see?"

"By Jove! Ryan, you don't neglect a point, do you?"

"Not if I can help it."

"And those three bullies were here, ready to take me away by force, in case I declined the proposition you made to me to go with you?"

"Precisely that."

"What about the row that would have followed?"

"You will admit that you would have stood no show against those three bullies, with me thrown in on the side; and, besides, they would have taken you unawares."

"I see. What about the storekeeper, and the hotel proprietor, and people who might have seen it all?"

"Oh, they all think now that you are nutty. I had that all fixed. Besides, they are accustomed to seeing bugs brought through here to the sanitarium."

Patsy scowled; then he laughed aloud.

"There wouldn't have been a hand raised to assist me, would there?" he asked.

"On the contrary, they would have assisted the keepers, if they did anything at all."

"And how long would you have detained me there, Ryan?"

"That would have depended upon circumstances. I told the doctor to detain you three weeks, unless he heard from me to the contrary sooner; but that as soon as he heard from me he was to set you at liberty as soon as you were willing to promise that you would not betray him—and he was to explain that it was all my fault, you know. Nice plan, wasn't it?"

"I never expected that you were a man of such resource, Ryan."

"Oh, yes. I should have been a diplomatist, Patsy. Now, do you feel like eating something? It is after five, and we should get started by 6:30."

"I haven't much appetite; still——"

"Come along and try it, anyhow. And say!"

"Well?"

"Don't get huffy if people stare at you a little."

"What do you mean?"

"Have you forgotten? They think you are my younger brother who has wheels. They regard me as more or less of a fool in not sending you to the sanitarium, but they think I am so fond of you that at the last moment I weakened and couldn't do it. See?"

"Confound you, Ryan!"

"Our names at this hotel are John and Patrick Worcester. Come ahead now."

When the two issued from the hotel an hour later night had fallen. The stars were out, but there was no moon, and the night was clear and crisp.

"Where to now?" asked Patsy. "Do you know your route?"

"Yes."

"Whither away, then?"

"Save for the fact, Patsy, that my general destination is the place where my cash is concealed, I have no idea and no choice concerning where we go. We're on a vacation. Have you any choice of place?"

"No."

"Then for the present we will merely go ahead; eh?"

CHAPTER V.

PLACED UNDER ARREST.

"I'm going to take a long chance, the very first thing we do," said Ryan presently.

"What sort of a chance, Ryan?" asked Patsy.

"Well, I want to get on the other side of the river, and so I guess we'll try it at Poughkeepsie. Of course, they will have received warnings there to look out for me, and this big Packard car, with nobody inside the limousine, will strike them as being just about the thing they are looking for."

"You have changed the numbers."

"Of course I have changed the numbers, but some one of the officers may be shrewd enough to hold us, for all that. It's a chance we have got to take, however."

"What's the matter with you're getting inside the car and letting me drive it?" asked Patsy.

"That would be worse than ever, for, without doubt, they have a description of me."

"Well, then, I'll get inside the car and be the owner, and you be chauffeur."

"Are you willing to do that, Patsy?"

"Sure thing. When I go into a thing, I go into it, not half-way, but all the way."

"Good! When we enter the city we'll do that."

Ryan had already found means to provide himself with a leather coat and gauntlets, cap and chauffeur's mask, for he had taken Patsy's as soon as they were out of the city of New York; and he had arrayed Patsy in his own outer clothing. Patsy, wisely, had made no comment upon this at the hotel where he awakened from his morphin sleep.

Ryan was a man who disdained any sort of disguise; who believed that the danger was infinitely greater in wearing one than without. He believed in the bold way.

But the cap and chauffeur's rig, generally, disguised him perfectly until one looked closely—and there was the prospect of some excitement, too, in running the gantlet of the police at Poughkeepsie.

As soon as they entered the city Patsy went inside the car, where he lighted a cigar and gave himself up to reflection.

It was a strange adventure that he was engaged upon, and he was enjoying it.

There was no prognosticating the end; but end there would be somewhere, at some time, and he hoped that it would be that he would recover that money and be able to return it to its owners; at least, so much of it as was not already spent.

They wound around among the hills of Pougkkeepsie, and at last descended to the point at which they were to cross.

They were almost upon the bridge, and Patsy had begun to think that there would be no incident of the night—it was then nine o'clock—when a call from a man at the curb stopped them.

"One moment there, if you please," he called respectfully enough. "I would like to ask you a question."

"Certainly," replied Ryan, stopping the car.

"Where are you from?"

"Greenwich, Connecticut," replied Ryan smoothly. "Why, officer?"

"Who is your owner?"

"Mr. Patrick Worcester. He is inside the car now. But why these questions, officer?"

Patsy here thought that it was time for him to interfere, and he threw open the door and leaped out, confronting the officer angrily.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded. "What are you stopping my car for? By what authority do you hold me up in this manner, particularly when I am in haste?"

"I beg your pardon, sir, but I have had orders to look out for a car like this one. I have to obey orders, you know, sir."

"Of course; of course. Well, get along with it as rapidly as possible. What do you wish to know? Of course this isn't the car you are looking for, but get ahead with what you want to know—and here is a couple of dollars to help you make haste. Now, what is it?"

"Isn't this what they call a Packard limousine?"

"It certainly is."

"I'm looking for license numbers 'New York, 769,343; Connecticut, 879,432; New Jersey, 987,654.' Are those your numbers?"

Patsy shrugged his shoulders.

"I really haven't an idea," he said. "Ask the chauffeur; or, better, look for yourself."

The officer went around behind the car and laboriously copied the numbers he found there. When he returned, his face was beaming.

"The numbers are entirely different," he said; "and, besides, instead of having a New Jersey license, you have one from Massachusetts."

"Precisely. Precisely. May we proceed now?"

"Yes, sir. Just one more question."

"Well, well, well, what is it?"

"Would you mind giving me the number of your car itself?"

"Not at all; not at all, only you must ask the chauffeur for it. I haven't an idea what it is. And, really, I think you are carrying this thing too far. Your orders do not permit you to interrupt peaceful citizens on the highways. Give him the number, chauffeur, and be quick about it."

Ryan got down grumblingly, as a chauffeur would have done under the circumstances, and presently found the number. Then he called to the officer.

"Come here and look for yourself," he said.

"Oh, just read it off to me," said the officer. "It is only a matter of form now. I know this is not the car."

So Ryan read off a number, which the officer took down carefully in his book of memoranda.

"I hope you'll pardon me, sir," he said to Patsy.

"Certainly; certainly. Forget it."

"I might say to you also, sir, that you do not at all answer to the description of the man supposed to be in the car I am looking for."

"Thank you"—dryly. "I suppose that is intended as a compliment, but if you were Irish, I should call it a bull. Good night."

On the opposite side of the river they turned to the northward, ascending among the hills and passing along roads that in daylight would have been beautiful.

Once they stopped long enough to eat heartily of the luncheon that Ryan had been thoughtful enough to bring with them; and then on and on again.

At one o'clock they passed along the outskirts of the city of Kingston, and from there they plunged into the mountain roads, heading in a generally western direction; at six in the morning they reached a little village, where the proprietor of the one store was just opening his establishment.

There they filled with gasoline, and again went on their way.

At seven they reached another village, where they ran the machine under a shed and went into the little hotel for their breakfast.

"I think, Ryan," said Patsy, while they were filling up with the good things to be found in the country, "that our car is rather too big for us. Don't you think——"

"Hush, Patsy. We're going to have trouble here."

"Eh? Why so."

"There is one of those smart-Aleck country constables out there. You didn't happen to notice him, but I did. He was piping us off through the window as we drove into the yard, but he stepped back out of sight when we entered the hotel office. He is outside now, inspecting the car."

"By Jove! He'll get the number of the car itself, won't he?"

"Much good it will do him. It is like the license numbers; it has been changed."

"What? Do you mean to tell me that you have succeeded in changing even that number?"

"Certainly. I spent two hours at it this morning. I succeeded, too."

"Tell me what you did."

"There are two 'eights' in the number. I did a very simple thing. I altered them to represent 'threes.' It was quite a job to do it nicely, and leave no trace of the fact that a change had been made; but I think I succeeded."

"And the license numbers are all right. You have made four changes in that respect, haven't you?"

"Yes. I think they will be some time in getting to the numbers we are wearing now; but all the same, those numbers leave a trail behind them which must be followed sooner or later. But I have got a scheme ahead of me that will beat even that game. You shall hear it presently."

Patsy suddenly broke out into immoderate laughter, and Ryan stared at him in surprise.

"What's the matter with you?" he asked.

"I was laughing at my own position in this affair," he replied.

"It is rather funny, isn't it?"

"I must say that I never expected to be aiding in the escape of a fugitive from justice; and not only aiding in it, but really taking an interest. For the first time in my life I am enjoying the excitement of the chase from the other end of it."

"And you like it?"

"With the end in view I like it—yes."

"That end that you have in view contemplates, of course, the ultimate recovery of the stolen cash, and my rearrest—when your parole is ended."

"I'm not so sure about the latter part of that statement, Ryan; however, I won't commit myself; but, so far as the cash is concerned, you are right."

"Well, Patsy, you'll never get it."

"I think I will; we'll see."

For a moment Ryan stared at him in admiration, and at last he blurted out:

"Look here, Patsy, bad as I am, I like you clear down to the ground. You're all right, and I wish I was good enough to command your respect and your affection. But I want to say this to you: We're together, and if you can beat me at the game we are playing, I'll pat you on the back and say: 'Well done, old chap!'"

The door of the room in which they were breakfasting opened at that moment, and a tall, angular man of fifty or so entered the room.

He came straight to the table where they were seated, and unceremoniously pulled a chair from under it at the opposite side and seated himself; but all the while he kept his eyes riveted on the face of Ryan.

"Good morning, Mister Ryan?" he said, after a moment, and in as cool and matter-of-fact way as if he and Ryan were old acquaintances.

But Ryan only stared at him for a moment, and then burst out laughing.

"Where did you get it, old chap?" he asked pleasantly. "I had an idea that this was a prohibition neighborhood."

"Isn't your name Ryan?" the constable demanded, ostentatiously thrusting a thumb in the armhole of his vest and showing his badge of office, while he tilted his chair back and threw one leg over the other.

"No, my dear sir, it isn't," replied Ryan laughingly. "Neither is it Jones, or Brown, or Plunkety-plunk. You've climbed the wrong tree."

"I'm looking for a man named Ryan."

"Oh, are you? Go to Boston, my dear fellow. You will find the city full of them."

"You look like the man I want, you do; you've got an automobile like his'n, too, and, though the numbers don't exactly agree, I'm going to place you under arrest and hold you on suspicion till I find out. That's what."

CHAPTER VI.

PLAYING A BOLD GAME.

As the reader knows, Patsy was not called upon to say a word. He had merely agreed to be a neutral party, and it had been specifically arranged that he was not expected under any circumstances to "fight for" his companion on their strange tour.

But it would not at all agree with his plans to have Ryan arrested at this stage of the game.

He wanted to see his own game through to the end, for he had thorough faith in it, and believed that ultimately he would win.

So now he considered that it was time for him to take a hand in what was going on.

"*Who are you?*" he demanded suddenly and harshly of the constable, fixing him with a cold stare and addressing him with such a degree of haughtiness that the man involuntarily withered a little, although his assurance was equal to almost anything.

"I'm Silas Warner, the constable of this town."

"What's all this rot you are talking about? If you have anything to say about that automobile outside, why don't you address its owner, and not the chauffeur? Have we been exceeding the speed limit?"

"It isn't rot that I'm talking about, and you'll find, mister, that I've got a good deal to say about that auto——"

"Look here, my man," interrupted Patsy, rising and passing quickly around the table until he stood directly in front of the constable, who turned to face him, "do you suppose that the badge you wear gives you the privilege of interrupting two gentlemen at breakfast, and insulting them in the way you have done. Get yourself out of this room, and do it quick!"

"I tell you——"

"Don't you tell me anything—now. Get out of this room! If you've got anything to say to me, wait till I have finished my breakfast. You will find that you have insulted the wrong man before you are through with this affair."

"I won't go. I came in here to arrest that man over there, and I'm going to do it."

"Arrest my chauffeur? For what?"

"For—for being a suspected person."

"Suspected of what?"

"Of robbery, and murder, and forgery, and breaking jail, and a lot of other things."

"Great Scott! man, are you crazy? Don't you know any better than to make a break like that? Haven't you been constable long enough to know what false arrest and imprisonment means? Don't you know that if you detained that man just one minute in this room against his will, it would constitute false imprisonment, and that you would be liable in heavy damages? Are you an idiot as well as a constable?"

"I know that I can detain a suspected person."

"You know, or should know, that you can do nothing of the sort. You haven't power to arrest anybody unless you see with your own eyes an actual transgression of the law."

"But, sir——"

"Don't talk back to me now. I've got something to say to you. If, after I have finished, you have still got a stomach for arresting anybody, go and get a warrant, and do it." Patsy had just remembered that it was Sunday morning. "You know that you can't arrest anybody without a warrant."

Patsy wheeled then, and spoke sharply and abruptly to Ryan.

"Gwynn!" he said harshly.

"Yes, sir," replied Ryan, instantly taking the cue.

"What did this man say his name is?"

"Silas Warner, sir."

"Write it down so that we won't forget it. Now, constable, what township is this?"

"Cauldwell," was the short reply.

"Constable of the township of Cauldwell; write it down, Gwynn. And now, Gwynn, tell the constable who it is that he has been trying to arrest. Tell him who I am."

The constable was genuinely uneasy by this time. Patsy's manner had impressed him, and he began to fear that he had made a mistake; but even Patsy was not prepared for the reply that Ryan made to this request of his.

"Constable," he said, "I'm sorry for you, honestly. Of course, you couldn't know who my master is, or you wouldn't have made such a break. Perhaps he'll overlook it; I don't know. What I do know is that he dislikes being disturbed at his breakfast. Now——"

"That will do, Gwynn. Tell the constable who I am, and then if he doesn't get out of the room, kick him out."

"Constable," said Ryan slowly and impressively, "you have been addressing your remarks to the lieutenant-governor of the State of New York."

Even Patsy so far forgot himself as to stare for an instant. He had relied upon Ryan's wit to make a suitable reply to the demand, but it had never occurred to him that it would fly so high as that.

As for the constable, his jaw literally dropped. His eyes bulged. He caught his breath with something like a sob, and all the ginger went out of him. He actually wilted.

Patsy had crossed over to the window, and was looking out through it; but now, at the critical moment, he wheeled suddenly and exclaimed:

"Now, constable, go and get your warrant. I will know how to reward you for this morning's impertinence."

That settled it.

The battle was won. The enemy was routed. A hen in a thunder-shower couldn't have looked meeker than did the constable.

"I—I—I had no idee!" he sputtered. "I thought——"

"Oh, spare us what you thought. You may explain all that to the sheriff, when he sends for you to answer charges—only I think I will just ask him to remove you, and not bother about the charges."

"But, sir, if you please——"

"Will you leave the room, sir!" thundered Patsy.

The constable, now thoroughly awed and cowed, turned slowly about and slunk away like a whipped cur with its

tail between its legs; and Patsy watched the door until he had disappeared through it.

As soon as the door had closed behind him Ryan threw his head forward on his arms upon the table, and shook with silent laughter, while Patsy stood grinning at the scene that had just been enacted.

"Talk about gall!" whispered Ryan, in an excess of restrained mirth.

"Gall! Confound you! Be careful now, Ryan. The proprietor will be rushing in here in a moment to see if we want anything more, and incidentally to have another look at us. Why the blazes didn't you make me governor, while you were about it?"

"Because you don't happen to wear whiskers. On my word, I would have done it if you had."

"I haven't a doubt of it. It's a lucky thing that we didn't register before we came in to our breakfast."

They were interrupted just there by a tentative rap at the door, which opened immediately to admit the proprietor. It was a very small and very old hotel, in a village that contained perhaps a dozen houses.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, bowing low to Patsy, who had returned to the window. "I—is there something more that I can do for you, governor?"

"Nothing, thank you," replied Patsy coldly, "unless you will undertake to keep the rest of your town officials out of this room. Here I have had my breakfast spoiled by——"

"I beg, sir, that you will let me prepare you another one."

"No; no, no; it is not your fault at all."

"But, governor, if your breakfast has been spoiled by the interruption, you should have another one."

"No. I don't want it. Thank you all the same. What is your name?"

"Canfield, sir. James Canfield."

"Well, Mr. Canfield, if you like to have your women folk prepare a good luncheon for me to take with me, I should enjoy that. I may not have a chance to stop for dinner."

"Certainly, sir, certainly. It shall be done; and if I do say it myself, my woman can get up about as fine a lunch as you ever e't."

He turned and went as far as the door, but there he stopped.

"Governor?" he said.

"Well, Mr. Canfield, what is it?"

"I'd like to say a good word for Warner, if you'll let me. He's a well-meaning man, sir. He's a leetle bit overzealous, mebby, but he means all right. He ain't been constable very long, sir, and I guess he feels his oats too much. I'd hate awfully to have him removed, because—well, because he's my wife's brother."

"Oh, I see; I see;" and Patsy laughed reassuringly. "Well, well, Mr. Canfield, I presume I shall forget the whole incident before I get to Albany. You may tell your wife that for her sake, as well as for the sake of that luncheon she is going to prepare, that I will forgive her brother this time."

"Thank you, sir! Thank you."

"Patsy! Patsy!" breathed Ryan, as soon as the proprietor was beyond the door, "why in the world didn't you go on the stage?"

"Come!" said Patsy. "Let's get out of this and have a smoke."

They passed into the little office of the hotel together to find that the proprietor had returned there after giving directions for the packing of the luncheon.

He was standing behind his small desk, and the moment they appeared he called out:

"Governor, won't you do me the honor to register your name in my book, sir?"

"Certainly, certainly. Gwynn, you register for me."

"But, sir——" the landlord began to expostulate.

"It will be all the same and better, I assure you, Mr. Canfield," said Patsy, laughing. "Mr. Gwynn is my private secretary as well as my chauffeur. He writes my name oftener than I do. Go ahead, Gwynn."

And so Ryan stepped up and wrote in the little book the name of the lieutenant-governor of the State, and underneath it he signed Allan Gwynn for himself.

Patsy lighted a cigar and started toward the door, but from an obscure corner of the room the tall form of the constable rose out of the depths of a chair and confronted him.

"I want to thank you, governor," he said sheepishly. "My brother-in-law told me what you said—that you'd overlook what I done. I——"

"Say no more about it, Mr. Warner. Do as I have done—forget it. So far as I am concerned the incident shall never be mentioned again."

"Sir, I——"

"Here; have a cigar. Step outside on the stoop with me. Gwynn, are you coming?"

"Yes, sir; in a moment, sir."

Outside the door, gazing at the front of the hotel as if it were a menagerie, Patsy found half a dozen villagers gathered. They all took off their hats and bowed profoundly as he emerged from the doorway, and he returned the salute with what dignity he could, although he was almost bursting with laughter at the ludicrousness of the situation.

"Gee!" he thought. "Suppose somebody happened to be here who knows the lieutenant-governor by sight. Well, Chanler is a good fellow, and some day I'll tell him all about it."

Half an hour later Patsy and Ryan were again in the automobile, ready to start. On the seat opposite Patsy, inside the car, was a large basket, literally crammed with good things, and it was all that Patsy could do to induce

the landlord to accept any pay for their entertainment, and for the luncheon. It was only by refusing to take it unless it was paid for that he succeeded.

CHAPTER VII.

PATSY HAS AN INSPIRATION.

They had decided to keep on their way throughout that day, for now they were in a part of the country where there was less danger of being stopped.

Their route lay along mountain roads, and frequently they were so steep as to tax the capacity of the Packard to the utmost.

By common consent they avoided larger towns, sometimes making considerable détours to get around them.

At two in the afternoon they stopped in a bit of wood beside the road to eat the luncheon, and they discovered that Landlord Canfield had not exaggerated when he said that his "woman" could put up the best lunch that was ever eaten.

Patsy thought so, too, and so did Ryan.

"Heavens, Patsy!" said Ryan, with his mouth full, "why don't you quit the detective business and become my pal? We could win the world, you and I!"

"Why don't you quit the outlaw business and come back and be good?" retorted Patsy.

"It's too late for that now, Patsy."

"It is never too late, Ryan; and you know it."

Ryan started.

There seemed to be a fatality in that expression. He recalled now the night when he had gone to the house where Lydia was killed, and had stood in the room where she died. He had said aloud at that time: "It is too late—too late!" and out of the blackness of that silent room it had seemed to him as if her sweet voice had replied to him:

"It is never too late, Jasper."*

"It is never too late," Patsy repeated, noticing the effect his words had had upon the man.

"It is too late for me, and don't you forget it," replied the other roughly. "I haven't any fancy for doing ten or fifteen years, at the least, in State prison, and I will never do it. I'll die first. I would shoot myself first—and you may as well know right now that I would shoot others, too—*even you*, Garvan, to resist arrest."

"Who said anything about arrest? I am talking about surrender."

"I'll never surrender, either."

"Possibly, if you should offer to return the money, the trust company could be induced——"

"Oh, drop it! What's the good of talking like that? In the first place, the trust company wouldn't! In the second place, as I look at it now, the trust-company affair is the least of my offenses. Do you suppose the department would forgive or forget my assault upon two policemen? And in the third place, if I knew that both of them would drop it, I wouldn't go back."

"Why not?"

"It's too late."

"I tell you, Ryan, it is never——"

"That will about do, Patsy. We'll change the subject, if you don't mind. How do you like being lieutenant-governor of the State, even for a few minutes?"

"I don't like it. I felt like a confidence man."

"You acted the part all right."

"I had to do it."

"No, you did not. It was not in our compact that you were to do anything to help me out if I got into trouble."

"I didn't do that for you; I did it for myself."

"Oh! Well, I'm obliged to you just the same."

"You needn't be. I tell you frankly that I accepted your offer to go with you because I believed that, somehow, it would lead me to the recovery of that money. That is what I am after."

"And me, too, incidentally, I suppose."

"No. I'm not after you—now. I'm on parole. I couldn't arrest you if I would, and, of course, you know I wouldn't go back on my word."

"Yes. I know that; but if, without breaking your word, you could bag me and the cash both, you'd do it, wouldn't you?"

"I'm not crossing any bridges till I get to them, Ryan. If the time ever comes when that question is pertinent, I'll answer it; but not till then."

"Patsy, I like you clear down to the ground."

"Thank you; and I may as well tell you that I could have liked you clear down to the ground, too, if you were only a different sort of a man in regard to your principles."

"Don't preach."

"I'm not; at least, I don't intend it that way. You know what I mean. Even Nick Carter likes the boy he used to know as Billy Studley, but he hasn't any use for the man who has lately dropped that name for the one of Jasper Ryan."

"I know it. I've got nothing against Nick for that."

"Some day, Ryan, you'll be taken and have to go to prison, and then——"

"I never will, Patsy—*never!* I'll never see the inside of a prison. Before that I will kill every man who stands between me and the way to liberty, and if that doesn't avail, I will kill myself. Now you have it."

"I believe you. Tell me something of what your plans are now. Where are we going, or don't you know?"

"Yes. I have rather a fair idea."

"Well? Will you tell me?"

"I think I will keep this car until we make Chicago,

*In Nick Carter Weekly, No. 575.

or, at least, Cleveland; but it is my intention to stop over for a few days in the central part of the State."

"With the idea of making any personal calls? Is that what you mean?"

"Something like that—yes."

"Look here, Ryan; of course, so far as the law is concerned, I am your enemy. A moment ago I told you that you would be taken some day. I know it now to a dead certainty—that is, if you are fool enough to go around seeing old friends or relations at a time like this one."

"Oh, rats, Patsy! I know the old game of the police which is expressed in the sentence, 'Watch the woman.' The woman in my case is dead. It isn't a case of that kind."

Patsy shrugged his shoulders.

"What is it, then?" he asked.

"You'll find out when we get there."

"Where is it, if you won't tell me what it is?"

"Have you ever heard of a place called Seneca Lake?"

"Yes. I have been there."

"Then you know where Watkins Glen is, don't you?"

"Yes."

"That's where I'm going."

Patsy shrugged his shoulders again.

"It's your funeral, not mine," he said, and lapsed into silence.

But suddenly it occurred to him that it might be there where the cash was concealed, and he pondered over the idea for several moments.

He knew perfectly well that Ryan, as Studley, as he then was, had not had time to take the money away from the city of New York himself, and, truth to tell, Patsy had been all along of the opinion that it was concealed somewhere in that city, and that Ryan intended to return for it after he had led the detectives a long chase to other parts of the country.

He had thought that Ryan was merely playing the game of hare-hunt, and intended sooner or later to double on his track and return for the cash he had cached.

But now it struck him that Ryan had no idea of ever returning to New York at all, and if that were true, it followed that he had somehow found a way to get the money out of the city and to a safe place, where it would remain until he called for it.

"I don't suppose I ought to warn you, but I will," he said to him presently.

"That's exceedingly good of you, Patsy," was the ironical reply, "What is the warning?"

"First, let me ask you a question or two."

"Well?"

"Have you got friends there, in Watkins?"

"I have got one friend there; yes."

"Don't you know, then, that every friend or associate you have had in the past, who was intimate with you at all, will be watched until you are found, no matter whether that friend lives in Watkins or San Francisco?"

"Yes; I know that."

"Well, then, aren't you doing a foolhardy thing by——"

"Let me interrupt you, Patsy."

"Go ahead."

"I don't believe that there is a man, woman, or child in the world that knows, or ever did know, of this friend to whom I refer."

"Bah! Hasn't that friend ever written to you?"

"Often."

"Well, don't you suppose that all your papers have been gone over by the police before this?"

"Assuredly."

"Well, then?"

"Nothing, then. I have never even put a letter into my pocket that was written by this friend. I have always destroyed them as soon as I read them. There isn't one of them in existence."

"Oh, well, do as you please about it, although I tell you frankly that I don't want you to run your head into a noose until I have done with you."

Ryan laughed aloud, and heartily.

"Really, Patsy," he said, "you are nothing if not original. Three days ago you were after me like hot cakes. Two days ago you so nearly got me that you cracked me on the skull so that my head is sore yet. To-day you have twice—no, one of them was last night; but to-day you have saved me from arrest by impersonating the lieutenant-governor of the State; and now you are advising me against what you consider a foolish move, simply because you fear that it will lead to my arrest. How do you account for the change?"

"Cupidity, I suppose. I want that money."

"Patsy, if I only thought you wanted it for yourself, I'd give you half of it. I would, upon my word. As it is——"

"Well?"

"You'll never get it."

"I think I will."

"Honestly, I'd burn it up before I'd return it to the company, and that's what you'd do with it if you got it."

"Certainly."

"Suppose I had it in my possession, and you had a chance to drug me to get it—would you do that?"

"Certainly *not*. I'm not going to steal it, if you did."

"Gee! Patsy, but you can say things that sting, sometimes."

"Well, you should know me better than to ask a question like that one. When I get possession of that money, Ryan, it will be with your knowledge and consent; or it will be after you are dead or in prison."

"Dead, my dear boy, for I will never be in prison. Don't forget that. There aren't men enough in the State of New York to put me there."

CHAPTER VIII.

NICK CARTER TACKLES A PUZZLE.

It is rather necessary now that we should return to Nick Carter, to view the case from the standpoint he was obliged to assume.

It will be remembered that he was with Conroy Conner, the United States Secret Service agent, at the home of his sister, Mrs. Baxter, in Eighty-third Street, and that Chick, who had been wounded, required immediate attention as soon as he made his report of the capture of Ryan, and stated the fact that the latter was imprisoned inside the automobile with Patsy on guard over him.

It did not occur to any of them that Patsy would require any assistance in guarding the captured man, for Patsy was known to be equal to almost any emergency.

And so the two men, with the assistance of Conner's sister, worked over Chick until his wound—which was really slight—was dressed; and then Nick Carter and Conner started for the door together.

Imagine their astonishment, if you can, when they discovered that there was no automobile in sight.

"I suppose he has got tired of waiting and has gone on home," suggested Conner lamely.

"Patsy never gets tired of doing anything he is told to do," replied the detective. "I am afraid, Conner, that Ryan has given us the slip again, and has taken Patsy with him. Come; we will go to my house and talk it over there. We have intruded upon your sister long enough."

They reentered the house, and Nick thanked Mrs. Baxter for all her courtesies.

"Chick, do you think you are able to travel, by now?" he asked of his chief assistant; and being assured that he was, the three left the house together and lost no time in getting to Nick Carter's residence.

"Conner," said Nick, when they arrived there and were seated in his study—for neither of them felt like sleeping just then, "our plans have undergone several drastic changes since seven o'clock in the evening. You had the game very prettily in your own hands then."

"I sure did, Nick; and only for that one mistake, in telling Ryan that Mrs. Baxter was my sister, our scheme would have worked out beautifully. But I never dreamed that Billy Studley and the Baxters might be known to each other."

"One never can tell, Con. The world is rather small, after all."

"What do you suppose could have happened out there in the automobile while we were attending to Chick, eh?"

"I can only surmise, of course, but the probability is that Ryan was not as severely injured as Danny supposed. Danny, I believe, was the only one who really had anything to do with him after Patsy struck him."

"That is the way I understood it."

"Well, the probability is that Ryan recovered consciousness on the way down here, and in some manner managed to slip out of the rope with which Danny supposed he bound him. After that, doubtless he played possum, and kept playing it till he got Patsy at a disadvantage. All that we really know is that he has escaped again, and that he has taken Patsy with him."

"But why should he take Patsy?"

"I suppose he regarded it as safer than leaving him behind. I think you had better telephone to the garage for the license numbers of that car and then ask headquarters to send out a general alarm to be on the lookout for it."

"And after that?" asked Conner.

"After that we will go to bed. There is absolutely nothing more that can be done to-night or to-morrow, either, for that matter. My own idea is that Patsy will find some way to communicate with me. He is full of expedients."

"Then we have got to sit down and hold our hands and wait. Is that the idea?"

"That's about it, Con."

As the reader knows, it was nearly four o'clock the following afternoon before Patsy posted his letter, which had to go to Boston before it could be returned to Nick Carter, and consequently it was not until the second morning after the escape that the letter was received in New York.

During that time nothing was done in the way of taking up the chase, save to warn policemen and constables throughout the surrounding country to be on the lookout for the big Packard.

It was a coincidence that almost simultaneously with the receipt of the letter came the information from the police that such an automobile had been found and taken. It bore the license number, all right, but there seemed to be a hitch about the affair somewhere, and would Nick Carter and the manager of the garage please look into the matter at once?

It was, of course, the Packard of the same model as that driven by Ryan, with which he had changed numbers in front of the Majestic.

The matter was quickly adjusted, for the manager of the garage knew the instant he saw it that it was not his machine that had been captured.

For reasons of his own, Nick said nothing about the letter he had received from Patsy, save to Conner and Chick.

"What do you suppose Patsy has got up his sleeve?" asked Conner, after he had read the letter through the second time.

"That is hard to tell, Con; but he evidently knows what he is talking about."

"You don't suppose that Ryan has compelled Patsy to write——"

"My dear Conner, you don't know Patsy, or you wouldn't even suggest such a thought."

"Could the letter be a forgery?"

"No; I know it to be genuine."

"How in blazes did they get to Boston in time to post that letter? They must have driven the car like mad."

"I haven't an idea that they are any nearer to Boston than we are."

"Then how do you account for the letter?"

"I think, in the first place, that the letter was written with the consent, and perhaps with the approval, of Ryan."

"Oh; I see."

"You will, perhaps, recall the fact that in the letter that Ryan once wrote to Patsy, requesting information about the death of Lydia, he told Patsy to address him openly at the general post-office, in Boston?"

"Yes."

"He said in that letter, if you remember, that it wouldn't do any good to try to trace him by it, because he had means of obtaining the letter without running any risk."

"I remember."

"Well, it follows, doesn't it, that Ryan has a friend he can trust who is employed in that post-office? And if that is so, and Patsy insisted upon writing to me to allay my possible fears regarding him, Ryan has made the condition that he should send the letter to Boston to be posted."

"Sure thing."

"My own idea is that Ryan has stuck to his original course, or something near it."

"What do you mean by his original course?"

"I mean that his course was westward. When you were playing the part of his cousin, and when he had confidence in you, he agreed, did he not, that his destination was Chicago?"

"Yes."

"He isn't a man who would alter his plans lightly; and, moreover, he would argue that the police would reason that he *would* alter them."

"Humph! Are you going to grant Patsy's request to keep your hand off the affair for the present, and leave it to him?"

"Most certainly *not*."

"Good! I was afraid you were."

"We must figure out, if we can, the course he has probably taken out of the city."

"Well, following out your own suggestion, made a moment ago, he has left the city to the northward. That was the direction in which we had started, you know; and, besides, the ferries would have been risky things for him that night."

"Where would he turn westward, do you suppose? Would he cross the river at——"

The ringing of the telephone interrupted him, and, after talking over it for a moment, he hung up the receiver and turned smilingly to Conner.

"There has been another mix-up of license numbers, Con," he said. "The numbers taken from the Packard that stood in front of the Majestic have been found on

a car—a Winton, this time—that is owned up near Yonkers. We seem to be getting on the trail. I have asked that a far cry be sent out for the numbers taken from the Winton."

"Good."

"But we mustn't depend upon that now. Ryan is getting farther and farther away all the time, and he will change his numbers less frequently as he advances. Such a trail could be followed to the end ultimately, but it would take a month to do it. We must work quicker than that."

"How do you propose to do it?"

"We have got to decide whether Ryan would cross the Hudson River at one of the ferries or at Poughkeepsie, or if he would go all the way around by Albany."

"It's a cinch that he would take the route that he thinks would puzzle us the most, and the one where he would be the least under observation."

"You mean by that that he would seek rural districts, and travel roads not frequented by automobile tourists, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Suppose we take a trip up the river this afternoon, Con."

"I'm with you. How shall we go, and where shall we go?"

"We will take the train to Poughkeepsie, and if we discover nothing there, one of us will work up the river and the other one down it until we find out—or, at least, think we do—where he has crossed. In the meantime I will instruct Danny to take my car to Poughkeepsie, but to stop at certain places along the way for telephonic instructions from me."

"So if we *should* happen to want the car, it will be somewhere near us, eh?"

"Exactly."

"That's all right. I'm with you on that. It will be rather a blind trail, but you and I have both got rather good noses for such things. But, say, Nick!"

"Well?"

"What has he done with Patsy all this time?"

"I confess, Con, that I am as greatly puzzled as you are about that. I can only explain it in one way."

"What is that?"

"I should have said in one of two ways."

"Well, what are they?"

"One is that Ryan might have induced Patsy to write that letter by making him false promises, and, after sending the letter to Boston to be posted, he has managed to shut Patsy up in one of those country sanitariums. That would be likely; it would be like the devilish ingenuity of Ryan, and he could easily bribe one of those places to do the act for him."

"It sounds to be very likely indeed. But what is the other?"

"The other is that he has somehow induced Patsy to travel with him as a neutral, for company; and that Patsy has consented to do so because he believes that he will be able to recover the lost cash. That would be just like Patsy; it would account for the letter he sent to me, also. And, besides, Ryan likes Patsy—at least, it would appear so."

"In either case, we ought to be able to trail them, or him."

"I think so; anyhow, we will try."

CHAPTER IX.

PICKING UP THE TRAIL.

At Poughkeepsie, that afternoon, they struck the trail almost at once.

Nick and Conner went directly to the headquarters of police, where the detective inquired of the chief if anything had been seen or heard, in that neighborhood, of the Packard automobile for which inquiry was being made.

"No," was the reply, "but one of my men thought he had it sure, about nine o'clock last night."

"Really? Tell me about it," said Nick; "or, better still, let me talk with the officer who thought he had it."

"It was all a mistake, you know, Mr. Carter. It was merely a car of the same model."

"Yes. I understand; but, all the same, I would like to talk with the officer, if you will tell me where I can find him."

"His name is Rifles. He is out on post now, but I am just going around that way, so if you gentlemen will walk along with me——"

"We will be glad to do so, chief."

Fifteen minutes later Nick was in conversation with the policeman whom Ryan and Patsy had encountered as they were about to cross the Hudson at Poughkeepsie.

"I made sure I had the car, Mr. Carter," said Rifles, when he understood what was wanted of him, "but I was speedily convinced of my mistake. The license numbers were different, and even the number of the car was not the one that was given me."

"H'm! Describe the passenger or passengers who were with the car, Rifles."

"There were only two, the chauffeur and the owner. The chauffeur wore his goggles, so I couldn't give you a very good description of him save that he was tall and spare and spoke with a very pleasing voice. His eyes were blue, I think."

"And the other? The owner?"

"Well, sir, he might have been anywhere from twenty to thirty-five years old. He had one of those young-old, or old-young faces, whichever way you please to put it. It was a handsome face, too, and I should say, Irish. He was about your height and build—perhaps not so big around the chest, and not so heavy as you are. His name was Worcester, from Greenwich."

"Thank you," said Nick, turning away. "I hope you will keep a good lookout here, Rifles. That car is likely to cross at any time, yet."

"I'll do that, sir."

As soon as the detective and Conner were alone together, the former exclaimed:

"Did you catch on, Con?"

"Sure."

"It was Ryan, all right, acting as the chauffeur, and Patsy was playing owner. Confound him! He thinks he can fool Ryan into giving up that money, but unless we overtake them somehow, it will end by Patsy's giving up his life. Wait here a moment till I use the telephone inside this store."

He came out, after a little, and announced:

"Danny should be here, I think, in about two hours, or a little less. We will use the time in getting something to eat, and a basket of luncheon to take with us."

"What are you going to do, Nick?"

"I'm going to take the direct trail."

"Do you think we can follow it? They were traveling in the night."

"We can at least try."

They ate rather hastily, and for the most part silently; and when the meal was finished, the detective started away at a rapid walk down the street.

"Where are you going?" asked Conner.

"To the telephone exchange."

"For what?"

"I'm going to call up all the little villages I can find on the map, on the other side of the river, until I find a place where they have stopped for gasoline, or food. The only trouble is, it is Sunday, and I'm afraid there will be some of them that I can't get. However, we will try."

The ensuing hour was passed by Nick Carter seated in a telephone-booth at the exchange; but at the end of the hour he was rewarded, for he called up the village of Cauldwell and was answered by no less a person than the constable himself.

He started in to ask the same list of questions he had prepared for them all, but the very first answer switched him off, and he knew that he had found the trail.

"I am a detective officer from New York City, in search of an automobile—a Packard, with limousine body—which is known to have gone in your direction. Have you seen anything of such a car within the last twenty-four hours?"

That was the question. He could hear the constable—he did not know yet that he was the constable—cough, and spit, and then the reply came:

"There was such a car here this morning, early—yes. But it was not the one you seek. We are sure of that."

"How are you sure of that?"

"Well, I am the constable here, and I was on the watch for the car you are seeking. I made a bad break with that car, for I sailed in to arrest them on the spot, believing that I had found the proper parties."

"And hadn't you?"

"No, siree. The gentleman turned out to be the lieutenant-governor of the State, traveling with his chauffeur, who is also his private secretary. I must say that he's a fine man, too."

"How long has the car been gone from there?"

"It left here about nine o'clock this morning."

"Do you know what route it took from there?"

"Yes."

"So that when I arrive there, you can direct me?"

"Yes; but you'll waste your time if you follow that car. I *know* what I'm talking about."

"No doubt you are right, constable; but, all the same, I think I will go over there and see you—and in the meantime you keep a close watch to-day, will you?"

"You bet I will."

"I can't get there until rather late this evening, I suppose. Will you wait for me at the hotel? I suppose there is a hotel."

"Yes; I'm in it now, talking to you. Yes, I'll wait for you if it takes all night."

"That paid," said Nick, as he left the telephone-booth and paid the score. "From Cauldwell I'll play the same trick, and although I don't suppose we can gain on them very much, I think I can at least follow the trail."

When he rejoined Conner, he was laughing.

"What do you suppose that young rascal of a Patsy is doing now?" he demanded.

"Give it up, Nick. What?"

"He has been impersonating the lieutenant-governor of the State. The——"

"You don't say so!"

"Fact. The constable at Cauldwell was going to arrest and hold them, as near as I can gather from what he said, and Patsy, with Ryan's help, just bluffed him out of it by pretending, or, rather, representing, that Patsy is the lieutenant-governor, and Ryan his chauffeur."

"Patsy must be feeling pretty sure of his game to go to such lengths as that to keep Ryan from arrest."

"I suspect," said Nick musingly, "that Patsy has pretty good reasons for what he is doing. It is evident to me that Ryan has told Patsy that he will not be taken alive, or something like that, and Patsy sees his only success in the game he is playing, in protecting the man until—well, until he wins out in whatever it is that he is trying to do."

"There is Danny, now," said Conner; and with their basket of luncheon, they leaped into the car.

It was half-past one o'clock that night when they arrived at Cauldwell and brought the machine to a stop in front of the small hotel.

A light was burning in the dingy office, and a tall, hard-looking man was leaning back against the wall in one of the chairs, snoring.

Nick stepped forward and shook him by the shoulders, and he leaped to his feet, dazed and uncertain of his surroundings.

"I am Nick Carter, of New York," said the detective. "You, I suppose, are the constable with whom I talked over the telephone this afternoon."

"Yes, sir, that's me. Silas Warner is my name. Glad to meet you, Mr. Carter. I've heard tell considerable about you. I guess I must ha' dropped off a mite, didn't I?"

"Yes; you seemed to be sleeping when I came in. Now, constable, what about that car that stopped here this morning?"

"It drove into the yard about seven, I think it was. I saw it come in. I live here in the hotel. The proprietor's wife is my sister, and——"

"Yes, yes. What did you do when you saw the car?"

"I didn't do nothin' at first; but as soon as the two men were in the dining-room getting their breakfast, I went out and examined it. I was so certain that it must be the car that's wanted that I almost arrested them when they stepped inside the door."

"I suppose you found that the numbers were all different from the ones you were seeking, didn't you?"

"Yes, sir. Even the number of the car itself."

"Do you remember what the number of the car was?"

"Yes; you couldn't very well forget it. It was composed of six threes."

"Six threes? What do you mean?"

"333,333."

"Oh! I see. And the number of the machine we want is 383,383, isn't it?"

"That's it."

"How did you find out that it was the lieutenant-governor's car?"

"Why, like a fool, I thought I'd hold them on suspicion till I found out for certain, and I butted into the dining-room before they had finished breakfast, and told them so," and then, to the infinite amusement of Nick and Conner, he related the entire incident just as it happened, portraying Patsy's pretended rage so graphically that the detectives laughed till tears were in their eyes.

"I don't wonder you laugh," said the constable ruefully. "I can laugh now; but it wasn't any laughing-matter when I thought I was going to be removed from office."

Nick felt that it would be too bad to undeceive him, and so he said:

"I don't suppose you have seen any other car of that pattern along this way."

"Nope. That's the only one."

"Do you keep gasoline here?"

"My brother-in-law does."

"Wake him up and tell him I want some—now; and

after you have done that, walk out with me far enough to show me the road that automobile took."

"Why, you don't mean to say that you're going to chase the governor, do you?"

"No; but I happen to wish to take the same route. You see, he is probably after the same machine, and I want to get ahead of him. When you have showed me the road, I will ask you to give me a list of the towns they would likely pass through."

"I can do that. I know every inch of this country. I was raised here as a boy, and I used to hunt it and fish it from one end to the other. Come along, sir."

"Call the landlord first. I want that gasoline, if it is night."

"All right, sir. All right."

CHAPTER X.

A RIDE THROUGH THE NIGHT.

"Constable," said the detective, after they had returned to the hotel from viewing the beginning of the road the detectives were to follow, "you say you know this part of the country like a book."

"I do, sir."

"Well, I would like you to describe to me that road we have just been to see. By describing it, I mean that I want you to tell me exactly where it would lead to, with its branches, if you were to follow a generally western direction."

"I understand, Mr. Carter; and that's just the point."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that it can't rightly be said to lead anywhere at all."

"I do not yet quite understand you."

"Well, it's this way. It isn't a main road at all; it is just a cut-off between main roads, and it keeps on being that for miles and miles and miles."

"And yet it remains the same road? Is that what you mean?"

"That is practically what I mean. If you follow its turns and twists and curves and don't count the jogs in it——"

"The jogs in it? What do you mean now?"

"Well, for example, six miles from here you cross another main road, and this road seems to come to an abrupt end; but forty rods to the north it goes on again. That is what I call a jog in the road."

"Oh; well, go on."

"If you follow it as I have said, and know which way to turn for the jogs, it will take you nigh onto a hundred and fifty miles, straight through the hills, or around them, and you will never once find a village on it, and rarely a house."

"How is that?"

"The farmhouses on the farms it crosses are all built to front on the main roads. This road is known as the 'back' road, for miles and miles."

"Very well, then, if you keep on the back road, what would be the very first village you would come to, constable?"

"A place called Hygeia, and that is way over at the western edge of Delaware County, almost on the edge of Chenango."

"How far is it from here?"

"A matter of seventy-five miles as the crow flies; a hundred and ten or twenty as the road runs."

"What sort of a place is Hygeia?"

"A little village about the size of this one; mebby not so big."

"You know the road perfectly, don't you, constable?"

"I do."

"How would you like to ride with us and act as guide, as far as Hygeia, constable? Can you find your way along that road in the night?"

"I could do it blindfolded; but I won't disguise the fact that it is pretty bad in some places—I mean for an automobile."

"We won't worry about that. How would you like to go that far as guide?"

"I don't know's I can git away."

"Of course you can get away."

"I feel's though I ought to stay here and keep a lookout for that there automobile."

"Time wasted, constable. The automobile has either passed here or has gone in another direction. I want to cut it off."

"Well, if you think that——"

"If you'll go, I'll give you ten dollars for your time, and five more for your expenses in getting back home."

"Well, there's no denyin' that that's good pay. When do you want to start?"

"Right now. Inside of five minutes."

"All right, sir. I'll go."

"Come on, then. Hello, Conner; is the tank filled?"

"Yes."

"Take those two ten-gallon cans the landlord has got out there, fill them, and pack them into the tonneau. Pay for the whole thing, will you?"

"I have already done both, Nick. I thought gasoline might not be handy on the road."

"Good; the constable is going with us as guide part of the way. You may ride in the tonneau with the gasoline and sleep the rest of the night. At daylight you can take my place, and I'll get some sleep."

And so they were off, flying through the night at a rate of speed that made the constable gasp for breath and hang on for dear life, grasping the sides of the seat with all his strength and many times wishing that he had remained peacefully at home where his life would have been safe.

Up-hill and down-hill, around sharp curves, down sudden pitches, up frightful grades where the big car just managed to gain the top; around "jogs," over rough places, through miniature swamps—thus their way lay through the remainder of that night.

When daylight came they were gliding along a level stretch of beautiful road at a considerable elevation, and the sunlight was just beginning to shine through the boughs of the trees, and Nick was on the point of calling to Conner to wake up, when he saw something that made him bring the car to a sudden stop.

He sprang out before anybody could ask him a question, and the wondering constable saw him bending forward while he appeared to be searching in the grass for something.

He returned presently with the butt of a cigar in his hand, and this he exhibited to Conner.

"It's one of Patsy's butts," he said laconically. "I'd know one of them if I found it in Hong Kong. They stopped here for luncheon yesterday. There are chicken bones and eggshells and all that sort of thing scattered all around there. They are having a picnic, all right."

"So it would appear."

"At least it tells us that we are on the right road."

"You bet."

"What is it all about, Mr. Carter?" asked the constable.

"Nothing, only I happened to see that some one had stopped here for luncheon. It was evidently the lieutenant-governor and his chauffeur."

"Very likely; my sister fixed them up a beautiful lunch."

"Chicken and eggs, eh? And bread with jam on it? And cake?"

"Yes."

"Good! Conner, do you want to drive while I take a nap?"

"Sure."

"Constable, I suppose you're sleepy by this time, aren't you?"

"No; I'm good for all day now."

"Well, keep Mr. Conner on the road. How far have we come since we left Cauldwell, should you say?"

"A matter of forty miles."

"Considering the hills, that is doing very well. How is the road beyond here?"

"It keeps getting better all the while now. Over in Chenango County there are some bad hills, and I don't know much about Cortland County, which comes next. You'll have to get another guide beyond Hygeia, if you want one."

"All right. Drive on, Con."

When the detective awoke, two hours later, they were gliding down a long stretch of hill road which descended very gradually toward a beautiful little village which seemed to nestle among the hills.

"We have been making good time, Nick," said Conner. "Yonder, about five miles away, the constable says, is Hygeia."

"Good! Is there a little hotel there, did you say, constable?"

"Yes. About the same sort as in Cauldwell."

"Conner, drive up in front of the hotel. If we find they keep gasoline, fill the tanks and save what we've got in the cans; and, constable!"

"Yes, sir."

"You stay outside and assist Mr. Conner, will you, while I go into the hotel and ask some questions? Whew! It's almost ten o'clock."

As soon as they stopped in front of the small hotel, Nick leaped out and went inside, before the landlord had a chance to come out to them; and the two were alone in the office room, since everybody else in the village had grouped around the automobile.

"Landlord," he said, backing him into the office again, "I want to talk with you a moment."

"Very well, sir."

"Did an automobile stop here at your place some time yesterday afternoon?"

"Yes, sir. About half-past four, I think it was, when they came. It was a great honor, too, to have them stop here."

"You mean the lieutenant-governor, I suppose?" said Nick, smiling.

"Yes, sir. Yes, sir. I suppose you are trying to catch up with them."

"You're right about that. It is very important, too, that I should. Affairs of state, you know, and all that. What time did he leave here, landlord?"

"At half-past nine in the evening, sir. He was very tired, and went directly to bed; but his chauffeur told me that it was important that they should be called in order to leave before ten, and directed me to have a hearty meal ready for them when they got up."

"You did so, I suppose?"

"Certainly."

"Do you know what road they took from here?"

"There is only one road *to* take, sir, and that is the one you have been following. We call it the 'back' road. It is called that for a hundred and fifty miles in either direction from here. Of course they could have turned into one of the main roads at almost any time."

"You didn't hear either of them say anything about their next stopping-place, did you?"

"Well, no, sir; not rightly. But I did hear the governor mention Watkins Glen to his man."

"Watkins Glen?"

"Yes, sir. They were looking at that map that hangs on the wall over there. It's a map of the State, as you see; and the governor he put his finger on it and says to his man: 'There is Watkins Glen, right there.' And he added that according to the scale he should judge it to be about seventy-five mile. I butted in then and told them that that was about right, if they had wings, but since they only had wheels, they would find that it was a hundred and twenty-five, if it was an inch."

"And what did the governor say to that?"

"He didn't say anything at all; but the chauffeur shrugged his shoulders, and without paying any attention to me, says to the governor:

"'We'll have to take that in on the way back, sir. We haven't got time to do it now.'

"And the governor says: 'You're right, Gwynn'—that's the name, Gwynn—'you're right. We will return that way.'

"All right. Thank you. You need not let it be known that we are trying to catch up with the lieutenant-governor—at least, not until we have gone. And now, see how quickly you can hustle out some hot coffee and something good to eat with it."

He stepped outside then, and went directly to the constable.

"Here is your fifteen dollars, constable," he said. "I would advise you to say nothing as to my business here. You only came to guide two gentlemen. Understand?"

CHAPTER XI.

LIKE A BLOODHOUND ON THE SCENT.

There were Chenango, Cortland, and Tompkins Counties still to cross, and a part of Schuyler as well before Watkins could be reached, for in that softly turned aside suggestion reported by the landlord Nick Carter read the truth as plainly as if it had been in print.

He understood that Patsy had made something of a "break," and that Ryan had sought to correct it.

Nick was thoroughly satisfied now, in his own mind, that Ryan and Patsy, for some reason probably known only to Ryan, were bound for Watkins.

"Landlord," he said, when they had finished with the meal he prepared for them, "do you happen to know a man around this village who is familiar with the roads west of here?"

"I know one."

"Who is he, and where is he?"

"He stands right in front of you. I refer to myself."

"Ah, indeed!"

"I have driven stages, at one time and another, all over this part of the State, sir."

"That so? How is business with you? Brisk?"

"Duller'n dish-water."

"I don't suppose you often have a chance to earn twenty-five dollars in a day, do you?"

"Mighty seldom."

"Well, if you will act as guide for me from here to Ithaca, I'll give you twenty-five dollars and you can pay your own expenses back here out of it."

"Give me three-fifty more, to come back on, and I'll go you."

"It's a bargain, landlord. We start in five minutes. Here, take out the three-fifty now, and then I'll have only the twenty-five to pay you when the job is done. I might not have the exact change then."

"If you are bound for Watkins, sir, I can guide you all the way there."

"Oh, I know the roads myself after we get to Ithaca. Do you know any quicker or easier way of getting there than following this 'back' road?"

"Sure. The 'back' road is hilly and bad in a good many places, and ain't fit for an automobile. I can find good roads for you, so's you can make good time."

"Well, that is precisely what I want you to do. If I could only get to Watkins ahead of the lieutenant-governor, it would surprise him some, wouldn't it?"

"But he ain't goin' that way now; he's coming back that way."

"Then I'm sure to beat him there, and that is what I want to do."

"Well, I'm ready to start the minute you are," said the landlord, pulling his cap on his head and taking an old coat from the peg in the wall. "It's likely to be chilly," he added.

Outside, Nick asked Conner:

"Did you succeed in getting any gasoline here, Con?"

"No; the last drop in town was sold to the lieutenant-governor," and Conner laughed. "By Jove! Nick, it's rich, isn't it?"

"Very. You have enough in the cans to carry us quite a way."

"I should say so."

"By the roads we will follow now, I expect we can get all the gasoline we want; eh, landlord?"

"Yes, sir. All you want, and without any trouble."

"Then all aboard. Good-by, constable. If you happen to come to New York some time, look me up. I'll be glad to see you."

There was a whir of machinery, and the automobile shot out of Hygeia, bound for Ithaca and Watkins.

"I feel as though I were out for a holiday, Nick," said Conner, who was behind in the tonneau, while Nick was under the wheel with the landlord beside him.

The detective nodded, but made no reply. Presently, however, he said to the landlord:

"I am going to make just as good time as the law allows, and a little better. If we approach any neighborhoods where you think we ought to go slower, you must tell me, for otherwise I shall drive hard over everything."

"Don't, for goodness sake, kill anybody, will you?" gasped the landlord, who was white to the lips. "You're going a million miles an hour now, ain't you?"

"Not quite."

"Seems so to me. This is the first time I ever rode in one of these things; and, say, if I live to get over it, it'll be the last."

"Oh, you'll get over that in a little while, and like it as well as we do."

"Mebby so. Say! Have a drink? I've got a flask with me."

"No; nor you, neither! Keep your flask in your pocket, landlord. Use it up after your job is completed if you want to. Just now there is nothing doing in that line."

"Oh, I never abuse it."

"I suppose not; but doubtless it has been abusing you for a good many years. How far do you make it from here to Ithaca?"

"Well, as we have got to go by this route, a matter of ninety-five miles, counting turns and twists and such like. I don't know but it's a hundred."

"A hundred, eh? Counting up-hill and bad road, if we could make twenty miles an hour, we should arrive at Ithaca about four this afternoon. It was just eleven when we left your place."

"Yep; I noticed that."

"We'll try to make it by six, anyhow."

At one o'clock Nick stopped the car long enough to change places with Conner, who drove the machine till three, when they changed again. They were then passing through the town of Harford, and were only about twenty-five miles from Ithaca. They had made a good run indeed.

Here they filled up with gasoline again, and stopped long enough to get something to eat, and to obtain a little rest from the jolting of the car.

"How do you like it now, landlord?" asked the detective, when the other was stretching himself after getting down from the car.

"Out of sight, mister! I've got the fever. I'll never be satisfied now till I have one of my own. At first I was plumb scared to death; but now I like it, and you can't go fast enough to suit me."

"That's always the way."

Nick made cautious inquiries at Harford, but could not discover that a car answering to the description of the Packard had passed that way, and he correctly surmised that Ryan had kept to the "back" road all the way—and he remembered that at Hygeia Ryan was just thirteen hours ahead of him.

He had been thirty-six hours ahead when Nick left New York, so, taking it all in all, Nick felt that he had done well.

All the while Nick kept saying to himself:

"Watkins. Watkins. Watkins. I wonder what business Ryan could have there?" For Nick Carter knew Watkins and its environment very well indeed. "I wonder if Lydia could have had any friends or relatives in that section of the State?"

He could not answer that question, however.

Once he turned to Conner and asked him:

"Conner, do you recall that at any time during this case the last name of Lydia has been mentioned?"

"No; I have never heard it mentioned."

"I guess you're right about that. I would have remembered it, if it had."

It was 4:45 when they drove into the city of Ithaca, approaching it down the hill past the college buildings; and just as they entered the city, in fact, they were directly in front of an automobile repair-shop, when one of the front tires burst.

"Thank goodness it waited till we got where it will be no trouble to repair it," said the detective, as he got out and went into the shop.

"We'll take a half-hour of rest here, Conner, while they are adjusting that tire. Landlord, here is your dough. I suppose you'll walk back in order to save it; eh?"

"No; I think I'll buy an automobile. Good-by, sir, and much obliged to you."

"Conner," said Nick, a little later, when the latter had suggested something about another guide, "I am like the constable of Cauldwell; I could go over the roads around here, blindfolded. I know every inch of them."

It was six o'clock and quite dark by the time they were ready to start on again, but the detective cared nothing for that. They had occupied the time in getting something to eat, and in walking about to rest the tired muscles of their bodies.

During the time the car had been quite thoroughly overhauled and cleaned, and they started out of Ithaca in as good shape as they had left New York.

"It was a great disappointment to Danny because I wouldn't bring him with us," said the detective to his friend, referring to the chauffeur for the first time, "but I couldn't afford to carry the weight. I knew that we would likely need guides part of the way. We have got a long, steep hill to climb now, Conner, to Taughannock Falls and Trumansburg; but after that it will be easy sailing—and then some mighty steep hills to descend."

"How far is it, Nick, to Watkins?"

"They call it twenty-two miles, but if you take the hills into consideration, it is about twice that distance."

There was no moon and very few stars.

Here and there one peeped out for a moment, but it disappeared almost as soon as it appeared.

"What time do you think we can make the town?" persisted Conner.

"Oh, about nine o'clock will suit me all right. I don't care about getting there any sooner than that, now."

"You seem to feel dead certain that Ryan is going there, Nick."

"I am reasonably certain that he is there by now; or so near to it that he will be there long before we are."

"He was thirteen hours ahead of us at Hygeia."

"Yes; I know. But he took a difficult road while we followed an easy one. And, besides, if I know Ryan at all, he will want to enter the town after dark. I wish I could guess who he is going there to see."

"Can't you?"

"No. I can explain it in only one way."

"What is that?"

"Lydia must have had a friend or a relative living there, or near there; or Ryan has an old friend of his own there."

"Well, what of that? What would he be looking up old friends for at such a time as this? I should think it would be just the time when he would want to fight shy of them."

"Conner, don't you realize that the money he took from the trust company disappeared awfully quick, and that he had very little time to do anything with it?"

"Yes."

"Well, I have always thought that he sent it by express

to somebody, done up in two wrappers, with the inside one addressed to himself, and marked: 'Put in a safe place and don't open till you hear from me or see me.' Don't you realize that in that way the money would be safely in the hands of an innocent party, who would have no knowledge of the contents of the package? I have all along thought that to be what he did with it. But we will know before morning—I think."

CHAPTER XII.*

NOT SUICIDE, BUT REGENERATION.

Nick Carter had sized up the circumstances rather correctly.

Ryan had no notion of riding into the village of Watkins with his big car while it was still daylight, and accordingly he loitered considerably along the last part of the journey, and he figured so that it was just after dark when they glided almost silently into the sleepy but beautiful town.

They went directly up Fourth Street to Decatur, where he turned the machine southward; and after that he made several short turns, until at last he brought the car to a standstill in a dark place under the trees, where he believed it would be unmolested.

He stopped the engine, and pulled the spark-plug out and dropped it into his pocket.

"Patsy," he said, "did I understand you correctly when I thought you said that you would never take that money without my consent and approval, unless I were dead or in prison?"

"You did, Ryan."

"That goes, does it?"

"That goes; yes."

"Then I am going to put more faith in you to-night than I ever put in a living man; and after to-night, you may travel on with me if you like, or you can take the back track. You shall have your choice. You need not talk about that now. You can decide about that later. Just at present I have something else to say to you."

"Well?"

"I am going to take you to a house that is less than five minutes' walk from here—to a family where I am known by still another name. I will ask you to call me 'Billy' while we are there, and if there is occasion to refer to my last name, it is Montgomery. You may not know it, but Montgomery is my middle name."

"No; I did not know it. Go on. What more."

"These people where I am taking you are the salt of the earth. They are as good as gold, and they would no more take me by the hand if they knew what I am, than they would consort with the devil himself. I want you to understand that thoroughly."

"I do. I understand."

"The mother is an aunt of Lydia's; the young woman you will meet is, therefore, her cousin. When Lydia and I were married—bigamously on my part, of course—we visited here for three days, and I insisted upon using the name of Montgomery. They have always supposed that Lydia was Mrs. William Montgomery; so you see they could by no possibility associate me with Jasper Ryan, or with Billy Studley."

"I see."

"When I took that money from the trust company, I expressed it here, to the young woman I have referred to. There was a second wrapper inside the outer one, and that bore the name of William Montgomery, with the legend: 'Please keep this package safely for me until I ask for it—for Lydia's sake.' And underneath the cords that bound the inner covering, I placed a letter addressed to Lydia's cousin. Are you following me?"

"Certainly I am."

"In that letter I told her that the package contained some papers and documents of the utmost importance to Lydia and me, and I asked her again to put the package where it would be safe, and to hold it under her own personal charge until either Lydia or I should ask for it in person. She was not to send it anywhere, on any account. Now, do you understand why I came here?"

"Yes."

"We will call there now. I will introduce you under your own name. We will let events shape themselves. We will remain there an hour or so, for I have to tell them about the death of Lydia, you know, and it will be hard."

"Do you mean to tell them that?"

"The truth? No. But that she died—yes. They must know it. I will tell them that it was very sudden and there was no time to send word. Now, come."

Patsy presently found himself bowing before a beautiful old lady with white hair, and her daughter, and he could not but notice the eagerness with which the members of the family gathered about Ryan, for news of

*For obvious reasons, the real names of the parties concerned are not given here. False ones have been substituted.

Lydia, and also it seemed because they were fond of this man, as well; and when Ryan finally found the courage to tell them about Lydia, Patsy had to turn his head to control his own emotions, at the sorrow they felt in that household.

To do Ryan justice, he made a very simple tale of it all; a story of heart failure, resulting from influenza; his own despair because of it all; his resolution to leave the country for a while, and finally the utter impossibility of his going away for a protracted stay without leaving those papers he had expressed to Minerva, in the hands of a competent lawyer to care for.

"If you will get the package for me, Minerva," he said, in conclusion, "I will take it away with me to-night. There is a lawyer in this town—a Mr. Bishop—whose services I think I will engage. I can probably find him to-night before he retires."

Minerva rose obediently and left the room, presently returning with the package in her hands; and she gave it at once to Ryan.

"Do you know," she said, "I have felt very strangely about that package. I am glad that you have come for it. It always seemed to me as if there was something sinister about it, as though I should stand guard over it all the time. Don't ever put a responsibility like that one upon me again, Billy; please."

"I won't, I promise you. Thank you very much for taking care of it. I am sorry that it has troubled you."

"Oh, it wasn't a trouble. It was only a vague sense of responsibility. Suppose I had died, like Lydia?" and a sob choked her throat.

"Tut, tut, girl! Don't talk like that," said Ryan.

He placed the package carelessly on the couch beside him, and continued to talk to them as only a perfect master at conversation can do it; and the moments sped by until Ryan suddenly started to his feet with the exclamation:

"Jove! It's after nine. If I am to find that lawyer to-night, I must go. I won't say good-by now. I will try to look in upon you to-morrow."

Then good nights were said, and Patsy was on the dark street again with Ryan; and then Ryan did a strange thing.

"Patsy," he said, "you know now where all that money is, save about twenty-five thousand dollars of it, most of which is in my pockets, also. You may walk behind me, if you like, and if you want to shoot me to get the money, do it. I think I should be obliged to you. Only, never let those good people know what a scoundrel I am; will you?"

"I'll try not."

"Are you going to seize the money?"

"No. You know not."

"Patsy, you're a good fellow. Suppose I should give it to you, what would you do with it?"

"Return it where it belongs."

"And if I should give it to you—I refer to what is in the package, not what is in my pockets—would you be willing to turn your back and let me go my own way? And would you try to think kindly of Billy Studley, in the future? I've got to keep some of it, you know, to get away with; but it is all there, in that package, but twenty-five thousand dollars, out of which I have spent about two, or, perhaps, a little more. If I should give you the package, could you, would you, do what I have asked?"

"Yes, Billy, I will. I'll do it for the sake of Lydia and those people we have just left."

"And not at all for my sake, Patsy?"

"Never mind what I think of you, Billy. You must know how much of it is for your sake, else I would not do it at all."

"Patsy, will you shake hands?" They were standing by the automobile, and Ryan's voice was hoarse with emotion.

"Sure! Put it there!" was Patsy's instant reply.

"God bless you, lad! I don't know whether it is you who have won me over, or if it is the memories brought up by that call we have just made; but I am going to try to be a better man. Whether I succeed or not, remains to be seen. Take the package, Patsy. It is yours to do with as you please. Some day, perhaps, I will communicate with you. I—I am glad that you hit me on the head, Patsy; glad that I morphined you—— There! It is over now. Get in."

They climbed into the front seats and started slowly toward the center of the village; but Ryan ran the car around into one of the back streets where there was a shed, and left it there.

"Now, Patsy," said Ryan, as they were walking away from it, "you heard me mention a lawyer named Bishop. Take the money to him, if you like, or keep it yourself."

"I'll take care of it, all right. But tell me what you are going to do now."

"There is a train out of here at ten-something, over the Pennsylvania, via Williamsport, I think. I shall take that train. By the way, here is the spark-plug. Put it in your pocket."

"Are you going back to New York?"

"I am going to Argentina, if I can get there—under the name of Montgomery. Patsy, will you call on Minerva to-morrow, and tell her I was sorry not to see her again, and all that?"

"Yes." As Patsy spoke, he stopped stock still and seized Ryan by the arm, hastily drawing him back into a shadow.

"Look over there," he said, "and tell me who you see?"

"Great Heaven! It is Nick Carter, and that other chap—Conner is his name, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"They have trailed us, haven't they?"

"So it would seem."

"And the game is up. I've got to blow my brains out, and Minerva has got to know——"

"Rubbish! It is almost ten now. Slide out of sight and get to the station. Leave the rest to me, Billy."

"Do you mean—that you——"

"Yes! I mean it! Skip!"

"Good-by, Patsy."

"Good-by, Billy."

Patsy waited a moment until he was certain that Ryan was well out of the way, and then he walked leisurely up the street, knowing full well that Nick and Conner would see him and would follow at a respectful distance, in the belief that he would take them to Ryan. He stopped a man who looked as if he knew things and asked him if he knew where Lawyer Bishop lived.

"Yes," said the man. "It is a mile or more from here; but if you want Mr. Bishop, I happen to know that he is around in his office right now. If you hurry, you'll catch him. It's right around the corner."

Patsy hurried. Mr. Bishop was there.

"Mr. Bishop," he said, "I want to ask you to take charge of a package for me, until morning, if you will be so kind as to lock it in your safe. It is rather valuable. I am Patrick Garvan, one of Nick Carter's assistants. Mr. Carter is in town, too, and may follow me in here at any moment. I would rather you would not mention the package, if he does."

But neither Nick nor Conner entered the office of the lawyer, and presently Patsy went out again, accompanied by the man of law as far as the corner, where they parted.

Patsy could see both Nick and Conner lingering in a shadow on the opposite side of the street, and he started away on a long walk which lasted until he knew that the train which carried Ryan was gone. Then he returned to the hotel.

While Patsy was registering, Nick entered and came up behind him.

"Good evening, governor," said Nick calmly.

"Good evening, chief," replied Patsy as calmly, and without turning his head. "Had a good run and a pleasant trip?"

"Patsy, turn around here. Come over to this corner. Now, where is Ryan?"

"He isn't very far away, chief. Not more than a few miles. The Packard is down the street under a shed."

"I want you to take me to Ryan, Patsy."

"You know I can't do that and keep my word with him; but tell me this: Which would you rather have, Ryan, or the money?"

"The money, of course; but I want both."

"Well, I'll promise you this much: You shall have all but twenty-five thousand of the money, in the morning. I can't get it till then, possibly—and that is all that I can say to-night. A parole is a parole, and a promise is a promise. That is your doctrine. Don't ask me to break mine."

"I won't, Patsy. But tell me this: Is he coming back to this hotel to-night? Had Conner and I better keep under cover?"

"No. He went to see some friends early in the evening. He won't be back here to-night."

In the morning Patsy went to the lawyer and secured the package. Then he took it to Nick Carter and placed it in his hands.

"There is the money," he said. "As for Jasper Ryan—he has ceased to exist."

"Suicide?" asked Conner dryly.

"No," replied Patsy. "Regeneration."

THE END.

The next number (580) of the NICK CARTER WEEKLY will contain "An International Conspiracy; or, Nick Carter's Second Assistant in a New Field."

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"That is the kind of request the commissioner of police has in dozens just about this time."

The speaker was a well-known London detective.

"Most people imagine shops have their own detectives; but this is not always the case. At such times as they are practically crowded, they rely on the regular detective force. For many years I have done 'special duty,' as it is called, at various sales in most of the big West End shops. A detective in the force, as you may know, has two holidays a month—alternate Sundays. To go on a special job he has to sacrifice one of his Sundays to make up for the week-day he is away. Such jobs are his own private business, for which he is paid by the shop employing him—$5 a day and refreshment.

"Before a sale, all the shop assistants are informed that a detective is coming. It is not possible to make his personality known to every assistant by a formal introduction, so word is given out that, at a certain time, he will walk through the shop accompanied by the manager. In this way he is recognized, and any assistant will know where to find him in case he is wanted. Suppose, for example, that an assistant has suspicions of a particular customer. She goes toward the spot where the detective is stationed, under pretense of getting a bill signed, and lets him know that he is wanted. Then it is understood that the first person she addresses when she gets back to her place is the 'suspect.' The detective closely watches her, and draws his own conclusions.

"The autumn sales offer particularly good scope to the shoplifter, because the cold weather enables her to wear her big cape, under cover of which she commits her thefts, as a natural course. I expect you know how they work? They hold up a garment or a fur in their right hand, and under cover of it gently draw the stolen article off the counter with their left hand, quickly secreting it under the cape. Shoplifters work generally in twos and threes. They never retain a stolen article. A slight kick of the foot is a signal for the confederate next them to take it, and so it is gradually and cleverly passed to a woman who is yards away from the counter, and could not be accused of taking anything from it.

"A shoplifter's cape is a truly wonderful thing, and has as many pockets as a poacher's coat. As soon as a shop-thief gets away with stolen property, she gets rid of it as quickly as possible. How? Well, at a 'receiver's.' During sale times, many of these 'receivers' ' houses are closely watched. The women know they are under vigilant eyes, and don't attempt to go near. They get hold of a street urchin. 'Here, Tommy, d'you want to earn a few pennies? Then just run round to Mrs. What-ever-her-name-is, and tell her a lady would like to see her in the Red Lion.' The receiver goes there, the property changes hands, as also does the agreed cash consideration, and Mrs. Receiver issues forth with the 'greatly reduced' bargain hung on hooks under her skirt.

"All the notorious shoplifters are perfectly well known to us. I have seen them at sales and bazaars, and am sure they have gone off with articles at different times, but, of course, could do nothing. They must be caught in the act. It is amazing to me how successfully they work. On the stage and in fiction the shoplifter is quite a superior person. In real life she is the lowest type of woman possible. They all come from the East End. They are common in appearance, in manners, in everything.

"Why, do you think a shoplifter would dare go back home with her cape? Not she. She goes to a public house, takes it off, and wraps it up in a bundle. Just before a sale, she takes it in a newspaper parcel and leaves it in a cloak-room near the big West End shops. Before going into action, her little boy or girl calls for 'mother's parcel,' brings it to a bar, and therefrom she issues in full war-paint, 'seeking what she may convey.' That's how it is done, sir."

When lions were still numerous and easily observed in southern Africa, they were sometimes seen instructing one another in voluntary gymnastics and practising their leaps, making a bush play the part of the absent game.

Moffat tells the story of a lion, which had missed a zebra by miscalculating the distance, repeating the jump several times for his own instruction; two of his comrades coming upon him while he was engaged in the exercise, he led them round the rock to show them how matters stood, and then, returning to the starting-point, completed the lesson by making a final leap. The animals kept roaring during the whole of the curious scene, "talking together," as the native who watched them said.

Sailors often suffer from toothache, and have to bear the pain as best they can until they reach the shore. One day a captain, seeing a sailor's mouth in a bad condition, asked the cause. The poor fellow had suffered so long with a bad tooth that his patience gave out. Then he took a chisel and hammer, and found a comrade who was willing to cut off the top of the tooth for him.

The same voyage the captain was caught with an aching tooth, the pain from which soon became unbearable. The remedy of the sailor had proved so much worse than the disease that the captain was unwilling to try the chisel.

His contrivance for extracting the tooth was ingenious though intricate. He fastened a fine long wire to a bullet, which he placed in his pistol with the wire hanging out. Securing the wire to the aching tooth, he opened his mouth as wide as possible and fired.

His ingenuity was rewarded, for the tooth followed the bullet into the air. His experience, however, made him buy a set of dentists' instruments. But, strange to relate, he never had any use for them, though he followed the sea for many years.

Revenge is a desire that occupies a place in the hearts of a great many convicts—revenge upon individuals who were instrumental in bringing about their present predicament, revenge against society in general. In but few cases, however, has revenge against individuals been executed in deed; in most cases, it is but a sullen rumbling of their feelings, that dies away and becomes extinct after time and reflection have weakened their memory—pictures of wrongs, real or imaginary, perpetrated in connection with their conviction for crime. There are not many so determined as one that, while serving a sentence of seven years, he frequently ruminated over the so-thought injustice of his conviction, and gradually worked himself into a determination to take revenge upon him who he maintained had accused him wrongly. His time expired, he left prison, sought his victim, and wreaked his revenge. For this he was returned to prison under sentence of ten years. "I'll take the ten-spot," he declared. "I'm not kicking; I've had my revenge and am satisfied." Luckily men of such ferocious determination are not in great numbers; the most of them forget their desire for revenge in time.

The most common form employed in the carrying out of the death-sentence is, in all probability, the guillotine. It has been, until recently, employed publicly in France, Belgium, Denmark, and two cantons in Switzerland. The gallows comes next, and is favored publicly in Austria, Portugal, and Russia, and partly in Great Britain and America. Death by the sword obtains in fifteen cantons in Switzerland, China, and Russia publicly, and in Prussia privately. Ecuador, Oldenburg, and Russia have adopted the musket, all publicly. In Turkey, they have strangulation by the cord, and in Spain the garrote, both public, and in Brunswick death by the ax. In some States of our own country criminals under the death-sentence are executed by electricity.

I want to thank you for the pleasure and practical knowledge your weekly has given me. I have read the "Nick Carter Weekly" now for some years; in fact, since the death of his wife. I have also read the Nick Carter stories in the *Magnet Library* until they caught up with the weeklies I have read, and think they are just fine.

I see that you now have in the weeklies another department, "Talks With Our Readers." Now, I think that very interesting as well as instructive, and hope readers will write up and say what they think of this king of detectives.

I would like to ask a few questions. Would you answer them in your weekly?

1. Which do you think the better, a Colt or Smith & Wesson revolver, and is a Colt automatic pistol as accurate as a revolver of same make?

2. I always understood that Winchester rifles had more velocity and penetration than any other, but that Remington rifles were more accurate. Is this true, and, if not, which is the better of the two?

3. Dogs, firearms, and dogs, are my long suit. Can you tell me if the mastiff is the largest breed of dogs known? I would like to get one of the largest and most intelligent breeds known. Do you know of a kennel that breed such dogs?

Please do me the favor to answer these questions.

Very truly, AN ADMIRER OF THE "LITTLE GIANT."
Savannah, Ga.

All the guns you mention are fine, and you can include the Marlin with the lot. We would not like to answer your question about revolvers, since each make has its advocates, and our opinion might be biased from an acquaintance with one especial design. Depend upon it, America puts out firearms of all descriptions that have no superiors in the world. A mastiff would be the best dog for your purpose. We thank you for the compliments you so earnestly express.

THE MAN PURSUED BY FATE.

BY "BILLY BLUE."

Fate with a big "F" follows in the path of some men like an avenging Nemesis, or a country constable with a sight-warrant.

And it occasionally overtakes them, and closes in on them for the final struggle like the prowling poultry-fancier on the somnolent spring chicken.

In a Greco-Roman contest with fate, mankind generally comes out second best.

We saw a man the other day who had been engaged in several exciting little sparring matches with fate, according to his own story, and had been pretty badly used up each time.

He was truly a deplorable-looking wreck.

His once raven locks were tinted with the hues of nine different hair-dyes, his raiment looked old and worn, and his Grecian proboscis glowed like an electric light.

He drifted into our office like a water-logged coal-scow rolling into a ferry-slip, tacked to the starboard of the water-cooler, took possession of the only vacant chair in the room, sadly blew his nose a couple of times, and then mournfully remarked:

"Seems tough, don't it?"

This ambiguous remark appeared to call for a comment of some sort, and supposing him to be a defeated candidate for the position of alderman, or something of that kind, we hazarded the reply:

"Ah! yes; it is tough. How much of a majority did the other fellow get?"

"Who? Where? What other fellow? Who said anything about any other fellow?" he demanded, eying us with astonishment.

"Nobody. We merely surmised that you were a defeated candidate, but if you never ran for office we hereby apologize."

"Run for office? Well, yes; I suppose since I got to going down-hill I do look like a politician. But I can't help it. I'm all run down, ragged, dusty, friendless, and homeless. It isn't my fault, either. Everything is against me. I have tried to brace up and be a shining ornament to society, and have my name mentioned in the papers; but it isn't any use. The fact is, fate shadows my footsteps, and continually reaches out for me with its iron hand. Yes, sir; fate is after me. For all I know, it may get a grip on my coat collar before I leave this chair."

We told him that we thought he was safe for the present, and then we asked him how long this thing had been going on.

"For months and years; ever since I can remember. I loved a female maiden once, fresh, fair, and seventeen; we met one night at the garden gate, and exchanged vows to be ever true to each other; the next day she ran away with a squint-eyed, bow-legged canal-boat captain."

"And you followed up the trail, armed with a club and a horse-pistol, of course?"

"Nothing of the kind. I knew that fate had robbed me; so I just sat down and let that false-hearted female slide. And, besides, he was a tough old canaler, and the chances are that he could have licked me, anyway."

He paused, and a sad smile flitted across his weather-beaten countenance, and faded away into a look of settled, hopeless despair.

"This female business was your first encounter with fate?" we finally queried.

"Yes; but it wasn't the last, by a considerable. From that time to this, misfortune has come swooping down upon me like avalanches on an Alpine village. After my girl vamosed with the ancient mariner aforesaid, I thought the thing over, and concluded there was no use trying to live any longer; so I bought a handful of Paris green, a lot of arsenic, and a couple of ounces of strychnin, mixed it all together, and swallowed it. Did that deadly compound waft my weary spirit through the trap-door of eternity into the realms of everlasting forgetfulness?

"Not a waft. It was the dismalest failure on record. Those poisons got up a three-cornered civil war among themselves, and completely annihilated each other, tore the coating all off the inside of my stomach, and doubled me up in the shape of an old-fashioned hairpin for a spell; but in a few days I was around again, as lively as ever.

"Mighty sad, wasn't it?"

We agreed with him, as a matter of course, and, after another of his sad, sweet smiles, he continued:

"Fate shot its first shaft at me over the shoulder of a female fraud, the next through the heels of a mule. You see, after I got over my disappointment in the love-affair, I purchased a bay mule and went into the trucking business. Splendid business, trucking; next thing to running a savings-bank. Now, how much do you suppose I cleared the first week?"

We hadn't the slightest idea, and we told him so.

"Well," he resumed, "I didn't clear a solitary copper. The very first time I went to hitch that quadruped up, he kicked my kneepan way around back of my leg. Then, because I expressed my disapproval of the critter's action with a club, he ran away and smashed the wagon to flinders, and eventually banged into a lamp-post and broke his good-for-nothing neck. That ended my mule-speculation.

"Then I went to the Black Hills, prospecting for gold, and I made out very well until the Indians found out I was there, and then they began prospecting for my hair, and I fell back several hundred miles, just in time to save my scalp.

"The Hills are chuck full of gold, etc., and I might have got rich as old Crœsus himself if I had stayed there a few weeks, but fate and the Indians were against me, and I had to leave.

"I came back to the outposts of civilization—that is, to a small town in Indianny, and settled down once more with a peaceful feeling of security in my bosom. Here I represented that I was a retired Indian fighter, and for a time I was the hero of the hour, and lived free gratis on the best the place afforded.

"But one day fate got on my track again, in the shape of a little, lop-eared chap called Zeke Simmons. We had a sort of a dispute, and I hinted in a casual way that he was a liar, and, the next thing I knew, somebody's fist hit me in the eye, and the earth turned a handspring and struck me on the back of the head.

"From this trifling circumstance a rumor got into circulation that the renowned Indian slayer—that's me—had been whipped by Zeke Simmons, the smallest man in town, and the citizens were so disgusted they turned out en masse and escorted me out of the place on a fence-rail.

"This simple hint was sufficient, and I shook the dust of old Indianny off my No. 9 cowhides, and boarded a cattle-train bound for the East.

"But fate was still after me.

"Before the train had gone ten miles it broke through a bridge. I expected my time had come then sure, and I was rather glad of it. But I was again disappointed.

"Some heartless wretch rescued me, and got me aboard of a through freight-train for New York; and here I am, still followed by fate, relentless, tireless fate.

"Since I got here I have been clubbed by six different policemen, got run over by a horse-car, two ice-wagons, and an ash-cart, fell off the elevated road, been licked by nine men who mistook me for somebody else, got jammed all to pieces in a free fight on an excursion, and now, if some undertaker would come along and shove me under the ground, I would feel extremely grateful. I'm as good as dead, anyway. Ten cents' worth of brandy—I mean rat-poison—will do the business for me, and if you've got a spare dime about you I'll crawl away to some quiet barroom—that is, a quiet spot—and put an end to my misery."

Mechanically, we handed him a dime, and his wo-begone countenance brightened up like a twenty-horse-power calcium light, and as he vanished through the door he muttered:

"Fate may not be over four feet behind me, for all I know, but if it overtakes me before I reach the nearest sample-room it has got to do some mighty lively traveling!"

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